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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

SWANSTON EDITION

VOLUME XXIII

23—*a*

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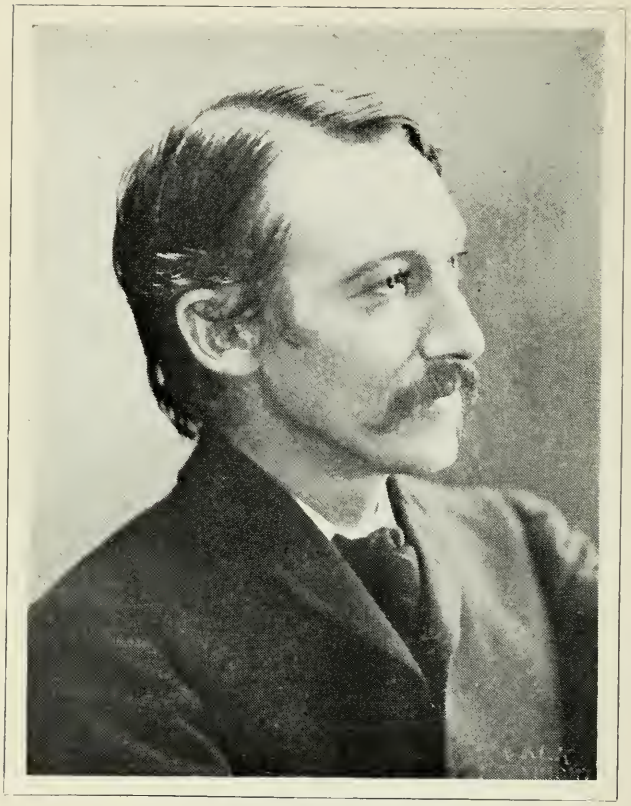

Yours very truly
Robert Louis Stevenson

THE WORKS OF

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

VOLUME TWENTY-THREE

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THE LETTERS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

EDITED BY

SIDNEY COLVIN

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INTRODUCTION

The circumstances which have made me responsible for selecting and editing the correspondence of Robert Louis Stevenson are the following. He was for many years my closest friend. We first met in 1873, when he was in his twenty-third year and I in my twenty-ninth, at the place and in the manner mentioned at page 54 of this volume. It was my good fortune then to be of use to him, partly by such technical hints as even the most brilliant beginner may take from an older hand, partly by recommending him to editors—first, if I remember right, to Mr. Hamerton and Mr. Richmond Seeley, of the Portfolio, then in succession to Mr. George Grove (Macmillan's Magazine), Mr. Leslie Stephen (Cornhill), and Dr. Appleton (the Academy); and somewhat, lastly, by helping to raise him in the estimation of parents who loved but for the moment failed to understand him. It belonged to the richness of his nature to repay in all things much for little, *ἑκατόμβοι᾽ ἐννεαβοιῶν*, and from these early relations sprang the affection and confidence, to me inestimable, of which the following correspondence bears evidence.

One day in the autumn of 1888, in the island of Tahiti, during an illness which he supposed might be his last, Stevenson put into the hands of his stepson, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, a sealed paper with a request that it might be opened after his death. He recovered, and had strength

enough to enjoy six years more of active life and work in the Pacific Islands. When the end came, the paper was opened and found to contain, among other things, the expression of his wish that I should prepare for publication "a selection of his letters and a sketch of his life." I had already, in 1892, when he was anxious—needlessly, as it turned out—as to the provision he might be able to leave for his family, received from him a suggestion that "some kind of a book" might be made out of the monthly journal-letters which he had been in the habit of writing me from Samoa: letters begun at first with no thought of publication and simply in order to maintain our intimacy, so far as might be, undiminished by separation. This part of his wishes I was able to carry out promptly, and the result appeared under the title *Vailima Letters* in the autumn following his death (1895). Lack of leisure delayed the execution of the remaining part. For one thing, the body of correspondence which came in from various quarters turned out much larger than had been anticipated. He did not love writing letters, and will be found somewhere in the following pages referring to himself as one "essentially and originally incapable of the art epistolary." That he was a bad correspondent had come to be an accepted view among his friends; but in truth it was only during one period of his life that he at all deserved such a reproach.[1] At other times, as became apparent after his death, he had shown a degree of industry and spirit in letter-writing extraordinary considering his health and his occupations. It was indeed he and not his friends, as will abundantly appear in the course of these volumes, who oftenest had cause to complain of answers neglected or delayed. His letters, it is true, were often the most

[1] From 1876 to 1879—see p. 185.

informal in the world, and he generally neglected to date them, a habit which is the despair of editors: but after his own whim and fashion he wrote a vast number, so that the work of sifting, copying, and arranging was long and laborious. It was not until the autumn of 1899 that the *Letters to his Family and Friends* were ready for publication, and in the meantime the task of writing the *Life* had been taken over by his cousin and my friend, Mr. Graham Balfour, who completed it two years later.

"In considering the scale and plan on which my friend's instruction should be carried out" (I quote, with the change of a word or two, from my Introduction of 1899), "it seemed necessary to take into account, not his own always modest opinion of himself, but the place which he seemed likely to take ultimately in the world's regard. The four or five years following the death of a writer much applauded in his lifetime are generally the years when the decline of his reputation begins, if it is going to suffer decline at all. At present, certainly, Stevenson's name seems in no danger of going down. On the stream of daily literary reference and allusion it floats more actively than ever. In another sense its vitality is confirmed by the material test of continued sales and of the market. Since we have lost him other writers, whose beginnings he watched with sympathetic interest, have come to fill a greater immediate place in public attention; but none has exercised Stevenson's peculiar and personal power to charm, to attach, and to inspirit. By his study of perfection in form and style—qualities for which his countrymen in general have been apt to care little—he might seem destined to give pleasure chiefly to the fastidious and the artistically minded. But as to its matter, the main appeal of his work is not to any mental tastes and

fashions of the few; it is rather to universal, hereditary instincts, to the primitive sources of imaginative excitement and entertainment in the race.

"The voice of the *advocatus diaboli* has been heard against him, as it is right and proper that it should be heard against any man before his reputation can be held fully established. One such advocate in this country has thought to dispose of him by the charge of 'externality.' But the reader who remembers things like the sea-frenzy of Gordon Darnaway, or the dialogue of Markheim with his other self in the house of murder, or the re-baptism of the spirit of Seraphina in the forest dews, or the failure of Herrick to find in the waters of the island lagoon a last release from dishonour, or the death of Goguelat, or the appeal of Kirstie Elliot in the midnight chamber—such a reader can only smile at a criticism like this and put it by. These and a score of other passages breathe the essential poetry and significance of things as they reveal themselves to true masters only: they are instinct at once with the morality and the romance which lie deep together at the soul of nature and experience. Not in vain had Stevenson read the lesson of the Lantern-Bearers, and hearkened to the music of the pipes of Pan. He was feeling his way all his life towards a fuller mastery of his means, preferring always to leave unexpressed what he felt that he could not express adequately; and in much of his work was content merely to amuse himself and others. But even when he is playing most fancifully with his art and his readers, as in the shudders, tempered with laughter, of the *Suicide Club*, or the airy sentimental comedy of *Providence and the Guitar*, or the schoolboy historical inventions of Dickon Crookback and the old sailor Arblaster, a writer of his quality cannot

help striking notes from the heart of life and the inwardness of things deeper than will ever be struck, or even apprehended, by another who labours, with never a smile either of his own or of his reader's, upon the most solemn enterprises of realistic fiction, but is born without the magician's touch and insight.

"Another advocate on the same side, in the United States, has made much of the supposed dependence of this author on his models, and classed him among writers whose inspiration is imitative and second-hand. But this is to be quite misled by the well-known passage of Stevenson's own, in which he speaks of himself as having in his prentice years played the 'sedulous ape' to many writers of different styles and periods. In doing this he was not seeking inspiration, but simply practising the use of the tools which were to help him to express his own inspirations. Truly he was always much of a reader: but it was life, not books, that always in the first degree allured and taught him.

> 'He loved of life the myriad sides,
> Pain, prayer, or pleasure, act or sleep,
> As wallowing narwhals love the deep'—

so with just self-knowledge he wrote of himself; and the books which he most cared for and lived with were those of which the writers seemed—to quote again a phrase of his own—to have been 'eavesdropping at the door of his heart': those which told of experiences or cravings after experience, pains, pleasures, or conflicts of the spirit, which in the eagerness of youthful living and thinking had already been his own. No man, in fact, was ever less inclined to take anything at second-hand. The root of all originality was in him, in the shape of an extreme

natural vividness of perception, imagination, and feeling. An instinctive and inbred unwillingness to accept the accepted and conform to the conventional was of the essence of his character, whether in life or art, and was a source to him both of strength and weakness. He would not follow a general rule—least of all if it was a prudential rule—of conduct unless he was clear that it was right according to his private conscience; nor would he join, in youth, in the ordinary social amusements of his class when he had once found out that they did not amuse *him;* nor wear their clothes if he could not feel at ease and be himself in them; nor use, whether in speech or writing, any trite or inanimate form of words that did not faithfully and livingly express his thought. A readier acceptance alike of current usages and current phrases might have been better for him, but was simply not in his nature. No reader of this book will close it, I am sure, without feeling that he has been throughout in the company of a spirit various indeed and many-mooded, but profoundly sincere and real. Ways that in another might easily have been mere signs of affectation were in him the true expression of a nature ten times more spontaneously itself and individually alive than that of others. Self-consciousness, in many characters that possess it, deflects and falsifies conduct; and so does the dramatic instinct. Stevenson was self-conscious in a high degree, but only as a part of his general activity of mind; only in so far as he could not help being an extremely intelligent spectator of his own doings and feelings: these themselves came from springs of character and impulse much too deep and strong to be diverted. He loved also, with a child's or actor's gusto, to play a part and make a drama out of life: but the part was always for the moment

his very own: he had it not in him to pose for anything but what he truly was.

"When a man so constituted had once mastered his craft of letters, he might take up whatever instrument he pleased with the instinctive and just confidence that he would play upon it to a tune and with a manner of his own. This is indeed the true mark and test of his originality. He has no need to be, or to seem, especially original in the form and mode of literature which he attempts. By his choice of these he may at any time give himself and his reader the pleasure of recalling, like a familiar air, some strain of literary association; but in so doing he only adds a secondary charm to his work; the vision, the temperament, the mode of conceiving and handling, are in every case personal to himself. He may try his hand in youth at a *Sentimental Journey*, but R. L. S. cannot choose but be at the opposite pole of human character and feeling from Laurence Sterne. In tales of mystery, allegorical or other, he may bear in mind the precedent of Edgar Poe, and yet there is nothing in style and temper much wider apart than *Markheim* and *Jekyll and Hyde* are from the *Murders in the Rue Morgue* or *William Wilson*. He may set out to tell a pirate story for boys 'exactly in the ancient way,' and it will come from him not in the ancient way at all, but re-minted; marked with a sharpness and saliency in the characters, a private stamp of buccaneering ferocity combined with smiling humour, an energy of vision and happy vividness of presentment, which are shiningly his own. Another time, he may desert the paths of Kingston and Ballantyne for those of Sir Walter Scott; but literature presents few stronger contrasts than between any scene of *Waverley* or *Redgauntlet* and any scene of the *Master of Ballantrae*

or *Catriona*, whether in their strength or weakness : and it is the most loyal lovers of the older master who take the greatest pleasure in reading the work of the younger, so much less opulently gifted as is probable—though we must remember that Stevenson died at the age when Scott wrote *Waverley*—so infinitely more careful of his gift. Stevenson may even blow upon the pipe of Burns and yet his tune will be no echo, but one which utters the heart and mind of a Scots maker who has his own outlook on life, his own special and profitable vein of smiling or satirical contemplation.

" Not by reason, then, of ' externality,' for sure, nor yet of imitativeness, will this writer lose his hold on the attention and regard of his countrymen. The debate, before his place in literature is settled, must rather turn on other points : as whether the genial essayist and egoist or the romantic inventor and narrator was the stronger in him—whether the Montaigne and Pepys elements prevailed in his literary composition or the Scott and Dumas elements—a question indeed which among those who care for him most has always been at issue. Or again, what degree of true inspiring and illuminating power belongs to the gospel, or gospels, airily encouraging or gravely didactic, which are set forth in the essays with so captivating a grace ? Or whether in romance and tale he had a power of inventing and constructing a whole fable comparable to his admitted power of conceiving and presenting single scenes and situations in a manner which stamps them indelibly on the reader's mind ? And whether his figures are sustained continuously by the true spontaneous breath of creation, or are but transitorily animated at happy moments by flashes of spiritual and dramatic insight, aided by the conscious devices of his singularly adroit and

spirited art? These are questions which no criticism but that of time can solve. To contend, as some do, that strong creative impulse and so keen an artistic self-consciousness as Stevenson's was cannot exist together, is quite idle. The truth, of course, is that the deep-seated energies of imaginative creation are found sometimes in combination, and sometimes not in combination, with an artistic intelligence thus keenly conscious of its own purpose and watchful of its own working.

"Once more, it may be questioned whether, among the many varieties of work which Stevenson has left, all distinguished by a grace and precision of workmanship which are the rarest qualities in English art, there are any which can be pointed to as absolute masterpieces, such as the future cannot be expected to let die. Let the future decide. What is certain is that posterity must either be very well or very ill occupied if it can consent to give up so much sound entertainment, and better than entertainment, as this writer afforded his contemporaries. In the meantime, among judicious readers on both sides of the Atlantic, Stevenson stands, I think it may safely be said, as a true master of English prose; scarcely surpassed for the union of lenity and lucidity with suggestive pregnancy and poetic animation; for harmony of cadence and the well-knit structure of sentences; and for the art of imparting to words the vital quality of things, and making them convey the precise—sometimes, let it be granted, the too curiously precise—expression of the very shade and colour of the thought, feeling, or vision in his mind. He stands, moreover, as the writer who, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, has handled with the most of freshness and inspiriting power the widest range of established literary forms—the moral, critical, and personal essay,

travels sentimental and other, romances and short tales both historical and modern, parables and tales of mystery, boys' stories of adventure, memoirs—nor let lyrical and meditative verse both English and Scottish, and especially nursery verse, a new vein for genius to work in, be forgotten. To some of these forms Stevenson gave quite new life; through all alike he expressed vividly an extremely personal way of seeing and being, a sense of nature and romance, of the aspects of human existence and problems of human conduct, which was essentially his own. And in so doing he contrived to make friends and even lovers of his readers. Those whom he attracts at all (and there is no writer who attracts every one) are drawn to him over and over again, finding familiarity not lessen but increase the charm of his work, and desiring ever closer intimacy with the spirit and personality which they divine behind it.

"As to the fitting scale, then, on which to treat the memory of a man who fills five years after his death such a place as this in the general regard, and who has desired that a selection from his letters shall be made public, the word 'selection' has evidently to be given a pretty liberal interpretation. Readers, it must be supposed, will scarce be content without the opportunity of a fairly ample intercourse with such a man as he was accustomed to reveal himself in writing to his familiars. In choosing from among the material before me" (I still quote from the Introduction of 1899), "I have used the best discretion that I could. Stevenson's feelings and relations throughout life were in almost all directions so warm and kindly, that very little had to be suppressed from fear of giving pain.[1]

[1] The point was one on which Stevenson himself felt strongly. In a letter of instructions to his wife found among his posthumous

On the other hand, he drew people towards him with so much confidence and affection, and met their openness with so much of his own, that an editor could not but feel the frequent risk of inviting readers to trespass too far on purely private affairs and feelings, including those of the living. This was a point upon which in his lifetime he felt strongly. That excellent critic, Mr. Walter Raleigh, has noticed, as one of the merits of Stevenson's personal essays and accounts of travel, that few men have written more or more attractively of themselves without ever taking the public unduly into familiarity or overstepping proper bounds of reticence. Public prying into private lives, the propagation of gossip by the press, and printing of private letters during the writer's lifetime, were things he hated. Once, indeed, he very superfluously gave himself a dangerous cold, by dancing before a bonfire in his garden at the news of a ' society ' editor having been committed to prison ; and the only approach to a difference he ever had with one of his lifelong friends arose from the publication, without permission, of one of his letters written during his first Pacific voyage.

" How far, then, must I regard his instructions about publication as authorising me to go after his death beyond the limits which he had been so careful in observing and desiring others to observe in life ? How much may now fairly become public of that which had been held sacred and hitherto private among his friends ? To cut out all

papers he writes : " It is never worth while to inflict pain upon a snail for any literary purpose ; and where events may appear to be favourable to me and contrary to others, I would rather be misunderstood than cause a pang to any one whom I have known, far less whom I have loved." Whether an editor or biographer would be justified in carrying out this principle to the full may perhaps be doubted.

that is strictly personal and intimate were to leave his story untold and half the charm of his character unrevealed: to put in too much were to break all bonds of that privacy which he so carefully regarded while he lived. I know not if I have at all been able to hit the mean, and to succeed in making these letters, as it has been my object to make them, present, without offence or intrusion, a just, a living, and proportionate picture of the man as far as they will yield it. There is one respect in which his own practice and principle has had to be in some degree violated, if the work was to be done at all. Except in the single case of the essay *Ordered South*, he would never in writing for the public adopt the invalid point of view, or invite any attention to his infirmities. 'To me,' he says, 'the medicine bottles on my chimney and the blood on my handkerchief are accidents; they do not colour my view of life; and I should think myself a trifler and in bad taste if I introduced the world to these unimportant privacies.' But from his letters to his family and friends these matters could not possibly be left out. The tale of his life, in the years when he was most of a correspondent, was in truth a tale of daily and nightly battle against weakness and physical distress and danger. To those who loved him, the incidents of this battle were communicated, sometimes gravely, sometimes laughingly. I have greatly cut down such bulletins, but could not possibly omit them altogether."

In 1911, twelve years after the above words were written, the estimate expressed in them of Stevenson's qualities as a writer, and of the place he seemed likely to maintain in the affections of English readers all the world over, had been amply confirmed by the lapse of time. The sale of his works kept increasing rather than diminish-

ing. Editions kept multiplying. A new generation of readers had found life and letters, nature and human nature, touched by him at so many points with so vivifying and illuminating a charm that it had become scarcely possible to take up any newspaper or magazine and not find some reference to his work and name. Both series of letters—even one mainly concerned, as the *Vailima Letters* are, with matters of interest both remote and transitory—had been read in edition after edition: and readers had been and were continually asking for more. The time was thought to have come for a new and definitive edition, in which the two series of letters already published should be thrown into one, and as much new material added as could be found suitable. The task of carrying out this scheme fell again upon me. The new edition constituted in effect a nearly complete epistolary autobiography. It contained not less than a hundred and fifty of Stevenson's letters hitherto unpublished. They dated from all periods of his life, those written in the brilliant and troubled days of his youth predominating, and giving a picture, perhaps unique in its kind, of a character and talent in the making. The present edition is a reprint of the edition of 1911, with a few errors of transcription and one or two of date corrected, and with a very few new letters added.

Much, of course, remains and ought to remain unprinted. Some of the outpourings of the early time are too sacred and intimate for publicity. Many of the letters of his maturer years are dry business letters of no general interest: many others are mere scraps tossed in jest to his familiars and full of catchwords and code-words current in their talk but meaningless to outsiders. Above all, many have to be omitted because they deal with the

intimate affairs of private persons. Stevenson has been sometimes called an egoist, as though he had been one in the practical sense as well as in the sense of taking a lively interest in his own moods and doings. Nothing can be more untrue. The letters printed in these volumes are indeed for the most part about himself: but it was of himself that his correspondents of all things most cared to hear. If the letters concerned with the private affairs of other people could be printed, as of course they cannot, the balance would come more than even. We should see him throwing himself with sympathetic ardour and without thought of self into the cares and interests of his correspondents, and should learn to recognise him as having been truly the helper in many a relation where he might naturally have been taken for the person helped.

As to the form in which the Letters are now presented, they fill three volumes instead of the four of the 1911 edition, the division into fourteen sections according to date being retained. As to the text, it is faithful to the original except in so far as I have freely used the editorial privilege of omission when I thought it desirable, and as I have not felt myself bound to reproduce slips and oddities, however characteristic, of spelling. In formal matters like the use of quote-marks, italics, and so forth, I have adopted a more uniform practice than his, which was very casual and variable.

To some readers, perhaps—(from this point I again resume my Introduction of 1899, but with more correction and abridgment)—to some, perhaps, the very lack of art as a correspondent to which Stevenson, as above quoted, pleads guilty may give the reading an added charm and flavour. What he could do as an artist in letters we

know. I remember Sir John Millais, a shrewd and very independent judge of books, calling across to me at a dinner-table, "You know Stevenson, don't you?" and then going on, "Well, I wish you would tell him from me, if he cares to know, that to my mind he is the very first of living artists. I don't mean writers merely, but painters and all of us. Nobody living can see with such an eye as that fellow, and nobody is such a master of his tools." But in his letters, excepting a few written in youth and having more or less the character of exercises, and a few in after years which were intended for the public eye, Stevenson the deliberate artist is scarcely forthcoming at all. He does not care a fig for order or logical sequence or congruity, or for striking a key of expression and keeping it, but becomes simply the most spontaneous and unstudied of human beings. He has at his command the whole vocabularies of the English and Scottish languages, classical and slang, with good stores of the French, and tosses and tumbles them about irresponsibly to convey the impression or affection, the mood or freak of the moment; pouring himself out in all manner of rhapsodical confessions and speculations, grave or gay, notes of observation and criticism, snatches of remembrance and autobiography, moralisings on matters uppermost for the hour in his mind, comments on his own work or other people's, or mere idle fun and foolery.

By this medley of moods and manners, Stevenson's letters at their best come nearer than anything else to the full-blooded charm and variety of his conversation. Nearer, yet not quite near; for it was in company only that his genial spirit rose to his very best. Few men probably have had in them such a richness and variety of human nature; and few can ever have been better gifted than

he was to express the play of being that was in him by means of the apt, expressive word and the animated look and gesture. *Divers et ondoyant*, in the words of Montaigne, beyond other men, he seemed to contain within himself a whole troop of singularly assorted characters. Though prose was his chosen medium of expression, he was by temperament a born poet, to whom the world was full of enchantment and of latent romance, only waiting to take shape and substance in the forms of art. It was his birthright—

> "to hear
> The great bell beating far and near—
> The odd, unknown, enchanted gong
> That on the road hales men along,
> That from the mountain calls afar,
> That lures the vessel from a star,
> And with a still, aerial sound
> Makes all the earth enchanted ground."

He had not only the poet's mind but the poet's senses: in youth ginger was only too hot in his mouth, and the chimes at midnight only too favourite a music. At the same time he was not less a born preacher and moralist and son of the Covenanters after his fashion. He had about him, as has been said, little spirit of social or other conformity; but an active and searching private conscience kept him for ever calling in question both the grounds of his own conduct and the validity of the accepted codes and compromises of society. He must try to work out a scheme of morality suitable to his own case and temperament, which found the prohibitory law of Moses chill and uninspiring, but in the Sermon on the Mount a strong incentive to all those impulses of pity and charity to which his heart was prone. In early days his sense of social injustice and the inequalities of human opportunity made

him inwardly much of a rebel, who would have embraced and acted on theories of socialism or communism, could he have found any that did not seem to him at variance with ineradicable instincts of human nature. All his life the artist and the moralist in him alike were in rebellion against the bourgeois spirit,—against timid, negative, and shuffling substitutes for active and courageous well-doing, —and declined to worship at the shrine of what he called the bestial goddesses Comfort and Respectability. The moralist in him helped the artist by backing with the force of a highly sensitive conscience his instinctive love of perfection in his work. The artist qualified the moralist by discountenancing any preference for the harsh, the sour, or the self-mortifying forms of virtue, and encouraging the love for all tender or heroic, glowing, generous, and cheerful forms.

Above all things, perhaps, Stevenson was by instinct an adventurer and practical experimentalist in life. Many poets are content to dream, and many, perhaps most, moralists to preach: Stevenson must ever be doing and undergoing. He was no sentimentalist, to pay himself with fine feelings whether for mean action or slack inaction. He had an insatiable zest for all experiences, not the pleasurable only, but including the more harsh and biting —those that bring home to a man the pinch and sting of existence as it is realised by the disinherited of the world, and excluding only what he thought the prim, the conventional, the dead-alive, and the cut-and-dry. On occasion the experimentalist and man of adventure in him would enter into special partnership with the moralist and man of conscience: he was prone to plunge into difficult social passes and ethical dilemmas, which he might sometimes more wisely have avoided, for the sake of trying to

behave in them to the utmost according to his own personal sense of the obligations of honour, duty, and kindness. In yet another part of his being he cherished, as his great countryman Scott had done before him, an intense underlying longing for the life of action, danger and command. "Action, Colvin, action," I remember his crying eagerly to me with his hand on my arm as we lay basking for his health's sake in a boat off the scented shores of the Cap Martin. Another time—this was on his way to a winter cure at Davos—some friend had given him General Hamley's *Operations of War*:—"in which," he writes to his father, "I am drowned a thousand fathoms deep, and O that I had been a soldier is still my cry." Fortunately, with all these ardent and divers instincts, there were present two invaluable gifts besides: that of humour, which for all his stress of being and vivid consciousness of self saved him from ever seeing himself for long together out of a just proportion, and kept wholesome laughter always ready at his lips; and that of a most tender and loyal heart, which through all his experiments and agitations made the law of kindness the one ruling law of his life. In the end, lack of health determined his career, giving the chief part in his life to the artist and man of imagination, and keeping the man of action a prisoner in the sickroom until, by a singular turn of destiny, he was able to wring a real prolonged and romantically successful adventure out of that voyage to the Pacific which had been, in its origin, the last despairing resource of the invalid.

Again, it was characteristic of this multiple personality that he never seemed to be cramped like the rest of us, at any given time of life, within the limits of his proper age, but to be child, boy, young man, and old man all at once. There was never a time in his life when Steven-

son had to say with St. Augustine, "Behold! my childhood is dead, but I am alive." The child lived on always in him, not in memory only, but in real survival, with all its freshness of perception unimpaired, and none of its play instincts in the least degree extinguished or made ashamed. As for the perennial boy in Stevenson, that is too apparent to need remark. It was as a boy for boys that he wrote the best known of his books, *Treasure Island*, and with all boys that he met, provided they were really boys and not prigs nor puppies, he was instantly and delightedly at home. At the same time, even when I first knew him, he showed already surprising occasional traits and glimpses of old sagacity, of premature life-wisdom and experience.

Once more, it is said that in every poet there must be something of the woman. If to be quick in sympathy and feeling, ardent in attachment, and full of pity for the weak and suffering, is to be womanly, Stevenson was certainly all those; he was even like a woman in being ἀρτίδακρυς, easily moved to tears at the touch of pity or affection, or even at any specially poignant impression of art or beauty. But yet, if any one word were to be chosen for the predominant quality of his character and example, I suppose that word would be manly. In his gentle and complying nature there were strains of iron tenacity and will: occasionally even, let it be admitted, of perversity and Scottish "thrawnness." He had both kinds of physical courage—the active, delighting in danger, and the passive, unshaken in endurance. In the moral courage of facing situations and consequences, of readiness to pay for faults committed, of outspokenness, admitting no ambiguous relations and clearing away the clouds from human intercourse, I have not known his equal.

The great Sir Walter himself, as this book will prove, was not more manfully free from artistic jealousy or irritability under criticism, or more unfeignedly inclined to exaggerate the qualities of other people's work and to underrate those of his own. Of the humorous and engaging parts of vanity and egoism, which led him to make infinite talk and fun about himself, and use his own experiences as a key for unlocking the confidences of others, Stevenson had plenty; but of the morose and fretful parts never a shade. "A little Irish girl," he wrote once during a painful crisis of his life, "is now reading my book aloud to her sister at my elbow; they chuckle, and I feel flattered. —Yours, R. L. S. *P.S.*—Now they yawn, and I am indifferent. Such a wisely conceived thing is vanity." If only vanity so conceived were commoner! And whatever might be the abstract and philosophical value of that somewhat grimly stoical conception of the universe, of conduct and duty, at which in mature years he had arrived, want of manliness is certainly not its fault. Take the kind of maxims which he was accustomed to forge for his own guidance:—"Acts may be forgiven; not even God can forgive the hanger-back." "Choose the best, if you can; or choose the worst; that which hangs in the wind dangles from a gibbet." "'Shall I?' said Feeble-mind; and the echo said, 'Fie!'" "'Do I love?' said Loveless; and the echo laughed." "A fault known is a fault cured to the strong; but to the weak it is a fetter riveted." "The mean man doubts, the great-hearted is deceived." "Great-heart was deceived. 'Very well,' said Great-heart." "'I have not forgotten my umbrella,' said the careful man; but the lightning struck him." "Shame had a fine bed, but where was slumber? Once he was in jail he slept." With this moralist maxims meant actions;

and where shall we easily find a much manlier spirit of wisdom than this?

There was yet another and very different side to Stevenson which struck others more than it struck myself, namely, that of the freakish or elvish, irresponsible madcap or jester which sometimes appeared in him. It is true that his demoniac quickness of wit and intelligence suggested occasionally a "spirit of air and fire" rather than one of earth; that he was abundantly given to all kinds of quirk and laughter; and that there was no jest (saving the unkind) he would not make and relish. The late Mr. J. A. Symonds always called him Sprite; qualifying the name, however, by the epithets "most fantastic, but most human." To me the essential humanity was always the thing most apparent. In a fire well nourished of seasoned ship-timber, the flames glance fantastically and of many colours, but the glow at heart is ever deep and strong; it was at such a glow that the friends of Stevenson were accustomed to warm their hands, while they admired and were entertained by the shifting lights.

It was only in company, as I have said, that all these many lights and colours could be seen in full play. He would begin no matter how—perhaps with a jest at some absurd adventure of his own, perhaps with the recitation, in his vibrating voice and full Scotch accent, of some snatch of poetry that was haunting him, perhaps with a rhapsody of analytic delight over some minute accident of beauty or expressiveness that had struck him in man, woman, child, or external nature. And forthwith the floodgates would be opened, and the talk would stream on in endless, never importunate, flood and variety. A hundred fictitious characters would be invented and launched on their imaginary careers; a hundred ingenious

problems of conduct and cases of honour would be set and solved ; romantic voyages would be planned and followed out in vision, with a thousand incidents ; the possibilities of life and art would be illuminated with search-lights of bewildering range and penetration, sober argument and high poetic eloquence alternating with coruscations of insanely apposite slang—the earthiest jape anon shooting up into the empyrean and changing into the most ethereal fantasy—the stalest and most vulgarised forms of speech gaining brilliancy and illuminating power from some hitherto undreamt-of application—and all the while an atmosphere of goodwill diffusing itself from the speaker, a glow of eager benignity and affectionate laughter emanating from his presence, till every one about him seemed to catch something of his own gift and inspiration. This sympathetic power of inspiring others was the special and distinguishing note of Stevenson's conversation. He would keep a houseful or a single companion entertained all day, and day after day and half the nights, yet never seemed to monopolise the talk or absorb it ; rather he helped every one about him to discover and to exercise unexpected powers of their own.

Imagine all this helped by the most speaking of presences : a steady, penetrating fire in the brown, wide-set eyes, a compelling power and richness in the smile ; courteous, waving gestures of the arms and long, nervous hands, a lit cigarette generally held between the fingers ; continual rapid shiftings and pacings to and fro as he conversed : rapid, but not flurried nor awkward, for there was a grace in his attenuated but well-carried figure, and his movements were light, deft, and full of spring. There was something for strangers, and even for friends, to get

over in the queer garments which in youth it was his whim to wear—the badge, as they always seemed to me, partly of a genuine carelessness, certainly of a genuine lack of cash (the little he had was always absolutely at the disposal of his friends), partly of a deliberate detachment from any particular social class or caste, partly of his love of pickles and adventures, which he thought befel a man thus attired more readily than another. But this slender, slovenly, nondescript apparition, long-visaged and long-haired, had only to speak in order to be recognised in the first minute for a witty and charming gentleman, and within the first five for a master spirit and man of genius. There were, indeed, certain stolidly conventional and superciliously official kinds of persons, both at home and abroad, who were incapable of looking beyond the clothes, and eyed him always with frozen suspicion. This attitude used sometimes in youth to drive him into fits of flaming anger, which put him helplessly at a disadvantage unless, or until, he could call the sense of humour to his help. Apart from these his human charm was the same for all kinds of people, without distinction of class or caste ; for worldly-wise old great ladies, whom he reminded of famous poets in their youth ; for his brother artists and men of letters, perhaps, above all ; for the ordinary clubman ; for his physicians, who could never do enough for him ; for domestic servants, who adored him ; for the English policeman even, on whom he often tried, quite in vain, to pass himself as one of the criminal classes ; for the shepherd, the street arab, or the tramp, the common seaman, the beach-comber, or the Polynesian high-chief. Even in the imposed silence and restraint of extreme sickness the power and attraction of the man made themselves felt, and there seemed to be more vitality and fire

of the spirit in him as he lay exhausted and speechless in bed than in an ordinary roomful of people in health.

But I have strayed from my purpose, which was only to indicate that in the best of these letters of Stevenson's you have some echo, far away indeed, but yet the nearest, of his talk—talk which could not possibly be taken down, and of which nothing remains save in the memory of his friends an impression magical and never to be effaced.

SIDNEY COLVIN.

THE LETTERS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1868-1882

THE LETTERS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I

STUDENT DAYS AT EDINBURGH

TRAVELS AND EXCURSIONS

1868–1873

The following section consists chiefly of extracts from the correspondence and journals addressed by Louis Stevenson, as a lad of eighteen to twenty-two, to his father and mother during summer excursions to the Scottish coast or to the Continent. There exist enough of them to fill a volume; but it is not in letters of this kind to his family that a young man unbosoms himself most freely, and these are perhaps not quite devoid of the qualities of the guide-book and the descriptive exercise. Nevertheless they seem to me to contain enough signs of the future master-writer, enough of character, observation, and skill in expression, to make a certain number worth giving by way of an opening chapter to the present book. Among them are interspersed four or five of a different character addressed to other correspondents, and chiefly to his lifelong friend and intimate, Mr. Charles Baxter.

On both sides of the house Stevenson came of interesting stock. His grandfather was Robert Stevenson, civil

engineer, highly distinguished as the builder of the Bell Rock lighthouse. By this Robert Stevenson, his three sons, and two of his grandsons now living, the business of civil engineers in general, and of official engineers to the Commissioners of Northern Lights in particular, has been carried on at Edinburgh with high credit and public utility for almost a century. Thomas Stevenson, the youngest of the three sons of the original Robert, was Robert Louis Stevenson's father. He was a man not only of mark, zeal, and inventiveness in his profession, but of a strong and singular personality ; a staunch friend and sagacious adviser, trenchant in judgment and demonstrative in emotion, outspoken, dogmatic,—despotic, even, in little things, but withal essentially chivalrous and soft-hearted ; apt to pass with the swiftest transition from moods of gloom or sternness to those of tender or freakish gaiety, and commanding a gift of humorous and figurative speech second only to that of his more famous son.

Thomas Stevenson was married to Margaret Isabella, youngest daughter of the Rev. Lewis Balfour, for many years minister of the parish of Colinton in Midlothian. This Mr. Balfour (described by his grandson in the essay called *The Manse*) was of the stock of the Balfours of Pilrig, and grandson to that James Balfour, professor first of moral philosophy and afterwards of the law of nature and of nations, who was held in particular esteem as a philosophical controversialist by David Hume. His wife, Henrietta Smith, a daughter of the Rev. George Smith of Galston, to whose gift as a preacher Burns refers scoffingly in the *Holy Fair*, is said to have been a woman of uncommon beauty and charm of manner. Their daughter, Mrs. Thomas Stevenson, suffered in early and middle life from chest and nerve troubles, and her son

may have inherited from her some of his constitutional weakness. Capable, cultivated, companionable, affectionate, she was a determined looker at the bright side of things, and hence better skilled, perhaps, to shut her eyes to troubles or differences among those she loved than understandingly to compose or heal them. Conventionally minded one might have thought her, but for the surprising readiness with which in later life she adapted herself to conditions of life and travel the most unconventional possible. The son and only child of these two, Robert Louis (baptized Robert Lewis Balfour[1]), was born on November 13, 1850, at 8 Howard Place, Edinburgh. His health was infirm from the first, and he was with difficulty kept alive by the combined care of his mother and a most devoted nurse, Alison Cunningham; to whom his life-long gratitude will be found touchingly expressed in the course of the following letters. In 1858 he was near dying of a gastric fever, and was at all times subject to acute catarrhal and bronchial affections and extreme nervous excitability.

In January 1853 Stevenson's parents moved to Inverleith Terrace, and in May 1857 to 17 Heriot Row, which continued to be their Edinburgh home until the death of Thomas Stevenson in 1887. Much of the boy's time was also spent in the manse of Colinton on the Water of Leith, the home of his maternal grandfather. Ill-health prevented him getting much regular or continuous schooling. He attended first (1858–61) a preparatory school kept by a Mr. Henderson in India Street; and next (at

[1] It was the father who, from dislike of a certain Edinburgh Lewis, changed the sound and spelling of his son's second name to Louis (spoken always with the "s" sounded), and it was the son himself who about his eighteenth year dropped the use of his third name and initial altogether.

intervals for some time after the autumn of 1861) the Edinburgh Academy.

Schooling was interrupted in the end of 1862 and first half of 1863 by excursions with his parents to Germany, the Riviera, and Italy. The love of wandering, which was a rooted passion in Stevenson's nature, thus began early to find satisfaction. For a few months in the autumn of 1863, when his parents had been ordered for a second time to Mentone for the sake of his mother's health, he was sent to a boarding-school kept by a Mr. Wyatt at Spring Grove, near London. It is not my intention to treat the reader to the series of childish and boyish letters of these days which parental fondness has preserved. But here is one written from his English school when he was about thirteen, which is both amusing in itself and had a certain influence on his destiny, inasmuch as his appeal led to his being taken out to join his parents on the French Riviera; which from these days of his boyhood he never ceased to love, and for which the longing, amid the gloom of Edinburgh winters, often afterwards gripped him by the heart.

Spring Grove School, 12th November 1863.

MA CHERE MAMAN,—Jai recu votre lettre Aujourdhui et comme le jour prochaine est mon jour de naisance je vous écrit ce lettre. Ma grande gatteaux est arrivé il leve 12 livres et demi le prix etait 17 shillings. Sur la soirée de Monseigneur Faux il y etait quelques belles feux d'artifice. Mais les polissons entrent dans notre champ et nos feux d'artifice et handkerchiefs disappeared quickly, but we charged them out of the field. Je suis presque driven mad par une bruit terrible tous les garcons kik up comme grand un bruit qu'il est possible. I hope you will find your

house at Mentone nice. I have been obliged to stop from writing by the want of a pen, but now I have one, so I will continue.

My dear papa, you told me to tell you whenever I was miserable. I do not feel well, and I wish to get home. Do take me with you. R. STEVENSON.

This young French scholar has yet, it will be discerned, a good way to travel; in later days he acquired a complete reading and speaking, with a less complete writing, mastery of the language, and was as much at home with French ways of thought and life as with English.

For one more specimen of his boyish style, it may be not amiss to give the text of another appeal which dates from two and a half years later, and is also typical of much in his life's conditions both then and later:—

2 *Sulyarde Terrace,*
Torquay, Thursday [*April* 1866].

RESPECTED PATERNAL RELATIVE,—I write to make a request of the most moderate nature. Every year I have cost you an enormous—nay, elephantine—sum of money for drugs and physician's fees, and the most expensive time of the twelve months was March.

But this year the biting Oriental blasts, the howling tempests, and the general ailments of the human race have been successfully braved by yours truly.

Does not this deserve remuneration?

I appeal to your charity, I appeal to your generosity, I appeal to your justice, I appeal to your accounts, I appeal, in fine, to your purse.

My sense of generosity forbids the receipt of more—my sense of justice forbids the receipt of less—than half-a-crown.—Greeting from, Sir, your most affectionate and needy son, R. STEVENSON.

From 1864 to 1867 Stevenson's education was conducted chiefly at Mr. Thomson's private school in Frederick Street, Edinburgh, and by private tutors in various places to which he travelled for his own or his parents' health. These travels included frequent visits to such Scottish health resorts as Bridge of Allan, Dunoon, Rothesay, North Berwick, Lasswade, and Peebles, and occasional excursions with his father on his nearer professional rounds to the Scottish coasts and lighthouses. From 1867 the family life became more settled between Edinburgh and Swanston Cottage, Lothianburn, a country home in the Pentlands which Mr. Stevenson first rented in that year, and the scenery and associations of which sank deeply into the young man's spirit, and vitally affected his after thoughts and his art.

By this time Louis Stevenson seemed to show signs of outgrowing his early infirmities of health. He was a lover, to a degree even beyond his strength, of outdoor life and exercise (though not of sports), and it began to be hoped that as he grew up he would be fit to enter the family profession of civil engineer. He was accordingly entered as a student at Edinburgh University, and for several winters attended classes there with such regularity as his health and inclinations permitted. This was in truth but small. The mind on fire with its own imaginations, and eager to acquire its own experiences in its own way, does not take kindly to the routine of classes and repetitions, nor could the desultory mode of schooling enforced upon him by ill-health answer much purpose by way of discipline. According to his own account he was at college, as he had been at school, an inveterate idler and truant. But outside the field of school and college routine he showed an eager curiosity and activity of

mind. "He was of a conversable temper," so he says of himself, "and insatiably curious in the aspects of life, and spent much of his time scraping acquaintance with all classes of men and womenkind." Of one class indeed, and that was his own, he had soon had enough, at least in so far as it was to be studied at the dinners, dances, and other polite entertainments of ordinary Edinburgh society. Of these he early wearied. At home he made himself pleasant to all comers, but for his own resort chose out a very few houses, mostly those of intimate college companions, into which he could go without constraint, and where his inexhaustible flow of poetic, imaginative, and laughing talk seems generally to have rather puzzled his hearers than impressed them. On the other hand, during his endless private rambles and excursions, whether among the streets and slums, the gardens and graveyards of the city, or farther afield among the Pentland hills or on the shores of Forth, he was never tired of studying character and seeking acquaintance among the classes more nearly exposed to the pinch and stress of life.

In the eyes of anxious elders, such vagrant ways naturally take on the colours of idleness and a love of low company. Stevenson was, however, in his own fashion an eager student of books as well as of man and nature. He read precociously and omnivorously in the *belles-lettres*, including a very wide range of English poetry, fiction, and essays, and a fairly wide range of French; and was a genuine student of Scottish history, especially from the time of the persecutions down, and to some extent of history in general. The art of literature was already his private passion, and something within him even already told him that it was to be his life's work. On all his

truantries he went pencil and copybook in hand, trying to fit his impression of the scene to words, to compose original rhymes, tales, dialogues, and dramas, or to imitate the style and cadences of the author he at the moment preferred. For three or four years, nevertheless, he tried dutifully, if half-heartedly, to prepare himself for the family profession. In 1868, the year when the following correspondence opens, he went to watch the works of the firm in progress first at Anstruther on the coast of Fife, and afterwards at Wick. In 1869 he made the tour of the Orkneys and Shetlands on board the steam yacht of the Commissioners of Northern Lights, and in 1870 the tour of the Western Islands, preceded by a stay on the isle of Earraid, where the works of the Dhu Heart-ach lighthouse were then in progress. He was a favourite, although a very irregular, pupil of the professor of engineering, Fleeming Jenkin, whose friendship and that of Mrs. Jenkin were of great value to him, and whose life he afterwards wrote; and must have shown some aptitude for the family calling, inasmuch as in 1871 he received the silver medal of the Edinburgh Society of Arts for a paper on a suggested improvement in lighthouse apparatus. The outdoor and seafaring parts of an engineer's life were in fact wholly to his taste. But he looked instinctively at the powers and phenomena of waves and tide, of storm and current, reef, cliff, and rock, with the eye of the poet and artist, and not those of the practician and calculator. For desk work and office routine he had an unconquerable aversion; and his physical powers, had they remained at their best, must have proved quite unequal to the workshop training necessary to the practical engineer. Accordingly in 1871 it was agreed, not without natural reluctance on his father's part, that he should give up

the hereditary vocation and read for the bar: literature, on which his heart was set, and in which his early attempts had been encouraged, being held to be by itself no profession, or at least one altogether too irregular and undefined. For the next several years, therefore, he attended law classes instead of engineering and science classes in the University, giving to the subject a certain amount of serious, although fitful, attention until he was called to the bar in 1875.

So much for the course of Stevenson's outward life during these days at Edinburgh. To tell the story of his inner life would be a far more complicated task, and cannot here be attempted even briefly. The ferment of youth was more acute and more prolonged in him than in most men even of genius. In the Introduction I have tried to give some notion of the many various strains and elements which met in him, and which were in these days pulling one against another in his half-formed being, at a great expense of spirit and body. Add the storms, which from time to time attacked him, of shivering repulsion from the climate and conditions of life in the city which he yet deeply and imaginatively loved; the moods of spiritual revolt against the harsh doctrines of the creed in which he had been brought up, and to which his parents were deeply, his father even passionately, attached; the seasons of temptation, to which he was exposed alike by temperament and circumstance, to seek solace among the crude allurements of the city streets.

In the later and maturer correspondence which will appear in these volumes, the agitations of the writer's early days are often enough referred to in retrospect. In the boyish letters to his parents, which make up the chief part of this first section, they naturally find no

expression at all; nor will these letters be found to differ much in any way from those of any other lively and observant lad who is also something of a reader and has some natural gift of writing. At the end of the section I have indeed printed one cry of the heart, written not to his parents, but about them, and telling of the strain which matters of religious difference for a while brought into his home relations. The attachment between the father and son from childhood was exceptionally strong. But the father was staunchly wedded to the hereditary creeds and dogmas of Scottish Calvinistic Christianity; while the course of the young man's reading, with the spirit of the generation in which he grew up, had loosed him from the bonds of that theology, and even of dogmatic Christianity in general, and had taught him to respect all creeds alike as expressions of the cravings and conjectures of the human spirit in face of the unsolved mystery of things, rather than to cling to any one of them as a revelation of ultimate truth. The shock to the father was great when his son's opinions came to his knowledge; and there ensued a time of extremely painful discussion and private tension between them. In due time this cloud upon a family life otherwise very harmonious and affectionate passed quite away. But the greater the love, the greater the pain; when I first knew Stevenson this trouble gave him no peace, and it has left a strong trace upon his mind and work. See particularly the parable called "The House of Eld," in his collection of *Fables*, and the many studies of difficult paternal and filial relations which are to be found in *The Story of a Lie*, *The Misadventures of John Nicholson*, *The Wrecker*, and *Weir of Hermiston*.

To Thomas Stevenson

In July 1868 R. L. S. went to watch the harbour works at Anstruther and afterwards those at Wick. Of his private moods and occupations in the Anstruther days he has told in retrospect in the essay *Random Memories: the Coast of Fife.* Here are some passages from letters written at the time to his parents. "Travellers" and "jennies" are, of course, terms of engineering.

'Kenzie House
First sheet: Thursday. *or whatever it is called,*
Second sheet: Friday. *Anstruther.* [*July* 1868.]

MY DEAR FATHER,—My lodgings are very nice, and I don't think there are any children. There is a box of mignonette in the window and a factory of dried rose-leaves, which make the atmosphere a trifle heavy, but very pleasant.

When you come, bring also my paint-box—I forgot it. I am going to try the travellers and jennies, and have made a sketch of them and begun the drawing. After that I'll do the staging.

Mrs. Brown "has suffered herself from her stommick, and that makes her kind of think for other people." She is a motherly lot. Her mothering and thought for others displays itself in advice against hard-boiled eggs, well-done meat, and late dinners, these being my only requests. Fancy—I am the only person in Anstruther who dines in the afternoon.

If you could bring me some wine when you come, 'twould be a good move: I fear *vin d'Anstruther;* and having procured myself a severe attack of gripes by two days' total abstinence on chilly table beer I have been forced to purchase Green Ginger ("Somebody or other's 'celebrated'"), for the benefit of my stomach, like St. Paul.

There is little or nothing doing here to be seen. By heightening the corner in a hurry to support the staging they have let the masons get ahead of the divers and wait till they can overtake them. I wish you would write and

put me up to the sort of things to ask and find out. I received your registered letter with the £5; it will last for ever. To-morrow I will watch the masons at the pier-foot and see how long they take to work that Fifeness stone you ask about; they get sixpence an hour; so that is the only datum required.

It is awful how slowly I draw, and how ill: I am not nearly done with the travellers, and have not thought of the jennies yet. When I'm drawing I find out something I have not measured, or, having measured, have not noted, or, having noted, cannot find; and so I have to trudge to the pier again ere I can go farther with my noble design.

Love to all.—Your affectionate son,

R. L. Stevenson.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

'Kenzie House, Anstruther [*later in July*, 1868].

my dear mother,—To-night I went with the youngest M. to see a strolling band of players in the townhall. A large table placed below the gallery with a print curtain on either side of the most limited dimensions was at once the scenery and the proscenium. The manager told us that his scenes were sixteen by sixty-four, and so could not be got in. Though I knew, or at least felt sure, that there were no such scenes in the poor man's possession, I could not laugh, as did the major part of the audience, at this shift to escape criticism. We saw a wretched farce, and some comic songs were sung. The manager sang one, but it came grimly from his throat. The whole receipt of the evening was 5s. and 3d., out of which had to come room, gas, and town drummer. We left soon; and I must say came out as sad as I have been for ever so long: I think that manager had a soul above comic songs. I said this to young M., who is a "Phillistine" (Matthew Arnold's Philistine you understand), and he replied,

"How much happier would he be as a common workingman!" I told him I thought he would be less happy earning a comfortable living as a shoemaker than he was starving as an actor, with such artistic work as he had to do. But the Phillistine wouldn't see it. You observe that I spell Philistine time about with one and two l's.

As we went home we heard singing, and went into the porch of the schoolhouse to listen. A fisherman entered and told us to go in. It was a psalmody class. One of the girls had a glorious voice. We stayed for half an hour.

Tuesday.—I am utterly sick of this grey, grim, sea-beaten hole. I have a little cold in my head, which makes my eyes sore; and you can't tell how utterly sick I am, and how anxious to get back among trees and flowers and something less meaningless than this bleak fertility.

Papa need not imagine that I have a bad cold or am stone-blind from this description, which is the whole truth.

Last night Mr. and Mrs. Fortune called in a dog-cart, Fortune's beard and Mrs. F.'s brow glittering with mist-drops, to ask me to come next Saturday. Conditionally, I accepted. Do you think I can cut it? I am only anxious to go slick home on the Saturday. Write by return of post and tell me what to do. If possible, I should like to cut the business and come right slick out to Swanston.—I remain, your affectionate son, R. L. STEVENSON.

TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

An early Portfolio paper *On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places*, as well as the second part of the *Random Memories* essay, written twenty years later, refer to the same experiences as the following letters. Stevenson lodged during his stay at Wick in a private hotel on the Harbour Brae, kept by a Mr. Sutherland.[1]

Wick, Friday, September 11, 1868.

MY DEAR MOTHER,— . . . Wick lies at the end or elbow of an open triangular bay, hemmed on either side

[1] See a paper on *R. L. Stevenson in Wick*, by Margaret H. Roberton, in Magazine of Wick Literary Society, Christmas 1903.

by shores, either cliff or steep earth-bank, of no great height. The grey houses of Pulteney extend along the southerly shore almost to the cape; and it is about half-way down this shore—no, six-sevenths way down—that the new breakwater extends athwart the bay.

Certainly Wick in itself possesses no beauty: bare, grey shores, grim grey houses, grim grey sea; not even the gleam of red tiles; not even the greenness of a tree. The southerly heights, when I came here, were black with people, fishers waiting on wind and night. Now all the S.Y.S. (Stornoway boats) have beaten out of the bay, and the Wick men stay indoors or wrangle on the quays with dissatisfied fish-curers, knee-high in brine, mud, and herring refuse. The day when the boats put out to go home to the Hebrides, the girl here told me there was "a black wind"; and on going out, I found the epithet as justifiable as it was picturesque. A cold, *black* southerly wind, with occasional rising showers of rain; it was a fine sight to see the boats beat out a-teeth of it.

In Wick I have never heard any one greet his neighbour with the usual "Fine day" or "Good morning." Both come shaking their heads, and both say, "Breezy, breezy!" And such is the atrocious quality of the climate, that the remark is almost invariably justified by the fact.

The streets are full of the Highland fishers, lubberly, stupid, inconceivably lazy and heavy to move. You bruise against them, tumble over them, elbow them against the wall—all to no purpose; they will not budge; and you are forced to leave the pavement every step.

To the south, however, is as fine a piece of coast scenery as I ever saw. Great black chasms, huge black cliffs, rugged and over-hung gullies, natural arches, and deep green pools below them, almost too deep to let you see the gleam of sand among the darker weed: there are deep caves too. In one of these lives a tribe of gipsies. The men are *always* drunk, simply and truthfully always. From morning to evening the great villainous-looking

fellows are either sleeping off the last debauch, or hulking about the cove "in the horrors." The cave is deep, high, and airy, and might be made comfortable enough. But they just live among heaped boulders, damp with continual droppings from above, with no more furniture than two or three tin pans, a truss of rotten straw, and a few ragged cloaks. In winter the surf bursts into the mouth and often forces them to abandon it.

An *émeute* of disappointed fishers was feared, and two ships of war are in the bay to render assistance to the municipal authorities. This is the ides; and, to all intents and purposes, said ides are passed. Still there is a good deal of disturbance, many drunk men, and a double supply of police. I saw them sent for by some people and enter an inn, in a pretty good hurry: what it was for I do not know.

You would see by papa's letter about the carpenter who fell off the staging: I don't think I was ever so much excited in my life. The man was back at his work, and I asked him how he was; but he was a Highlander, and —need I add it?—dickens a word could I understand of his answer. What is still worse, I find the people hereabout—that is to say, the Highlanders, not the northmen —don't understand *me*.

I have lost a shilling's worth of postage stamps, which has damped my ardour for buying big lots of 'em: I'll buy them one at a time as I want 'em for the future.

The Free Church minister and I got quite thick. He left last night about two in the morning, when I went to turn in. He gave me the enclosed.—I remain your affectionate son, R. L. STEVENSON.

TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

Wick, September 5, 1868. *Monday.*

MY DEAR MAMMA,—This morning I got a delightful haul: your letter of the fourth (surely mis-dated); papa's

of same day; Virgil's *Bucolics*, very thankfully received; and Aikman's *Annals*,[1] a precious and most acceptable donation, for which I tender my most ebullient thanksgivings. I almost forgot to drink my tea and eat mine egg.

It contains more detailed accounts than anything I ever saw, except Wodrow, without being so portentously tiresome and so desperately overborne with footnotes, proclamations, acts of Parliament, and citations as that last history.

I have been reading a good deal of Herbert. He's a clever and a devout cove; but in places awfully twaddley (if I may use the word). Oughtn't this to rejoice papa's heart—

> "Carve or discourse; do not a famine fear.
> Who carves is kind to two, who talks to all."

You understand? The "fearing a famine" is applied to people gulping down solid vivers without a word, as if the ten lean kine began to-morrow.

Do you remember condemning something of mine for being too obtrusively didactic. Listen to Herbert—

> "Is it not verse except enchanted groves
> And sudden arbours shadow coarse-spun lines?
> Must purling streams refresh a lover's loves?
> *Must all be veiled, while he that reads divines*
> *Catching the sense at two removes?*"

You see, "except" was used for "unless" before 1630.

Tuesday.—The riots were a hum. No more has been heard; and one of the war-steamers has deserted in disgust.

The *Moonstone* is frightfully interesting: isn't the detective prime? Don't say anything about the plot; for I have only read on to the end of Betteredge's narrative, so don't know anything about it yet.

[1] Aikman's *Annals of the Persecution in Scotland.*

I thought to have gone on to Thurso to-night, but the coach was full; so I go to-morrow instead.

To-day I had a grouse: great glorification.

There is a drunken brute in the house who disturbed my rest last night. He's a very respectable man in general, but when on the "spree" a most consummate fool. When he came in he stood on the top of the stairs and preached in the dark with great solemnity and no audience from 12 P.M. to half-past one. At last I opened my door. "Are we to have no sleep at all for that *drunken brute?*" I said. As I hoped, it had the desired effect. "Drunken brute!" he howled, in much indignation; then after a pause, in a voice of some contrition, "Well, if I am a drunken brute, it's only once in the twelvemonth!" And that was the end of him; the insult rankled in his mind; and he retired to rest. He is a fish-curer, a man over fifty, and pretty rich too. He's as bad again to-day; but I'll be shot if he keeps me awake, I'll douse him with water if he makes a row.—Ever your affectionate son,

R. L. STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

The Macdonald father and son here mentioned were engineers attached to the Stevenson firm and in charge of the harbour works.

Wick, September 1868. *Saturday,* 10 A.M.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—The last two days have been dreadfully hard, and I was so tired in the evenings that I could not write. In fact, last night I went to sleep immediately after dinner, or very nearly so. My hours have been 10—2 and 3—7 out in the lighter or the small boat, in a long, heavy roll from the nor'-east. When the dog was taken out, he got awfully ill; one of the men, Geordie Grant by name and surname, followed *shoot* with considerable *éclat;* but, wonderful to relate! I kept well. My hands are all skinned, blistered, discoloured, and

engrained with tar, some of which latter has established itself under my nails in a position of such natural strength that it defies all my efforts to dislodge it. The worst work I had was when David (Macdonald's eldest) and I took the charge ourselves. He remained in the lighter to tighten or slacken the guys as we raised the pole towards the perpendicular, with two men. I was with four men in the boat. We dropped an anchor out a good bit, then tied a cord to the pole, took a turn round the sternmost thwart with it, and pulled on the anchor line. As the great, big, wet hawser came in it soaked you to the skin: I was the sternest (used, by way of variety, for sternmost) of the lot, and had to coil it—a work which involved, from *its* being so stiff and *your* being busy pulling with all your might, no little trouble and an extra ducking. We got it up; and, just as we were going to sing "Victory!" one of the guys slipped in, the pole tottered—went over on its side again like a shot, and behold the end of our labour.

You see, I have been roughing it; and though some parts of the letter may be neither very comprehensible nor very interesting to *you*, I think that perhaps it might amuse Willie Traquair, who delights in all such dirty jobs.

The first day, I forgot to mention, was like mid-winter for cold, and rained incessantly so hard that the livid white of our cold-pinched faces wore a sort of inflamed rash on the windward side.

I am not a bit the worse of it, except fore-mentioned state of hands, a slight crick in my neck from the rain running down, and general stiffness from pulling, hauling, and tugging for dear life.

We have got double weights at the guys, and hope to get it up like a shot.

What fun you three must be having! I hope the cold don't disagree with you.—I remain, my dear mother, your affectionate son, R. L. Stevenson.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

The following will help the reader to understand the passage referring to this undertaking in Stevenson's biographical essay on his father where he has told how in the end "the sea proved too strong for men's arts, and after expedients hitherto unthought of, and on a scale hyper-Cyclopean, the work must be deserted, and now stands a ruin in that bleak, God-forsaken bay." The Russels herein mentioned are the family of Sheriff Russel. The tombstone of Miss Sara Russel is to be seen in Wick cemetery.

Pulteney, Wick, Sunday, September 1868.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—Another storm: wind higher, rain thicker: the wind still rising as the night closes in and the sea slowly rising along with it; it looks like a three days' gale.

Last week has been a blank one: always too much sea.

I enjoyed myself very much last night at the Russels'. There was a little dancing, much singing and supper.

Are you not well that you do not write? I haven't heard from you for more than a fortnight.

The wind fell yesterday and rose again to-day; it is a dreadful evening; but the wind is keeping the sea down as yet. Of course, nothing more has been done to the poles; and I can't tell when I shall be able to leave, not for a fortnight yet, I fear, at the earliest, for the winds are persistent. Where's Murra? Is Cummy struck dumb about the boots? I wish you would get somebody to write an interesting letter and say how you are, for you're on the broad of your back I see. There hath arrived an inroad of farmers to-night; and I go to avoid them to Macdonald if he's disengaged, to the Russels if not.

Sunday (*later*).—Storm without: wind and rain: a confused mass of wind-driven rain-squalls, wind-ragged mist, foam, spray, and great, grey waves. Of this hereafter; in the meantime let us follow the due course of historic narrative.

Seven P.M. found me at Breadalbane Terrace, clad in spotless blacks, white tie, shirt, et cætera, and finished off below with a pair of navvies' boots. How true that the devil is betrayed by his feet! A message to Cummy at last. Why, O treacherous woman! were my dress boots withheld?

Dramatis personæ: père Russel, amusing, long-winded, in many points like papa; mère Russel, nice, delicate, likes hymns, knew Aunt Margaret ('t'ould man knew Uncle Alan); fille Russel, nommée Sara (no h), rather nice, lights up well, good voice, *interested* face; Miss L., nice also, washed out a little, and, I think, a trifle sentimental; fils Russel, in a Leith office, smart, full of happy epithet, amusing. They are very nice and very kind, asked me to come back—" any night you feel dull: and any night doesn't mean no night: we'll be so glad to see you." *C'est la mère qui parle.*

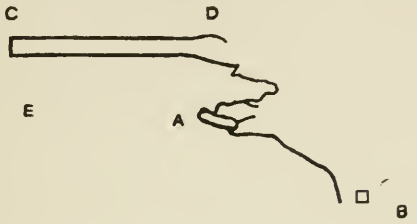
I was back there again to-night. There was hymn-singing, and general religious controversy till eight, after which talk was secular. Mrs. Sutherland was deeply distressed about the boot business. She consoled me by saying that many would be glad to have such feet whatever shoes they had on. Unfortunately, fishers and seafaring men are too facile to be compared with! This looks like enjoyment! better speck than Anster.

I have done with frivolity. This morning I was awakened by Mrs. Sutherland at the door. " There's a ship ashore at Shaltigoe! " As my senses slowly flooded, I heard the whistling and the roaring of wind, and the lashing of gust-blown and uncertain flaws of rain. I got up, dressed, and went out. The mizzled sky and rain blinded you.

She was a Norwegian: coming in she saw our first gauge-pole, standing at point E. Norse skipper thought it was a sunk smack, and dropped his anchor in full drift of sea: chain broke: schooner came ashore. Insured: laden

with wood : skipper owner of vessel and cargo : bottom out.

I was in a great fright at first lest we should be liable ; but it seems that's all right.



C D is the new pier.

A the schooner ashore. B the salmon house.

Some of the waves were twenty feet high. The spray rose eighty feet at the new pier. Some wood has come ashore, and the roadway seems carried away. There is something fishy at the far end where the cross wall is building ; but till we are able to get along, all speculation is vain.

I am so sleepy I am writing nonsense.

I stood a long while on the cope watching the sea below me ; I hear its dull, monotonous roar at this moment below the shrieking of the wind ; and there came ever recurring to my mind the verse I am so fond of :—

> "But yet the Lord that is on high
> Is more of might by far
> Than noise of many waters is
> Or great sea-billows are."

The thunder at the wall when it first struck—the rush along ever growing higher—the great jet of snow-white spray some forty feet above you—and the "noise of many waters," the roar, the hiss, the "shrieking" among the shingle as it fell head over heels at your feet. I watched if it threw the big stones at the wall ; but it never moved them.

Monday.—The end of the work displays gaps, cairns of ten ton blocks, stones torn from their places and turned right round. The damage above water is comparatively little: what there may be below, *on ne sait pas encore.* The roadway is torn away, cross-heads, broken planks tossed here and there, planks gnawn and mumbled as if a starved bear had been trying to eat them, planks with spales lifted from them as if they had been dressed with a rugged plane, one pile swaying to and fro clear of the bottom, the rails in one place sunk a foot at least. This was not a great storm, the waves were light and short. Yet when we are standing at the office, I felt the ground beneath me *quail* as a huge roller thundered on the work at the last year's cross wall.

How could *noster amicus Q. maximus* appreciate a storm at Wick? It requires a little of the artistic temperament, of which Mr. T. S.,[1] C.E., possesses some, whatever he may say. I can't look at it practically however: that will come, I suppose, like grey hair or coffin nails.

Our pole is snapped: a fortnight's work and the loss of the Norse schooner all for nothing!—except experience and dirty clothes.—Your affectionate son,

R. L. Stevenson.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

I omit the letters of 1869, which describe at great length, and not very interestingly, a summer trip on board the lighthouse steamer to the Orkneys, Shetlands, and the Fair Isle. The following of 1870 I give (by consent of the lady who figures as a youthful character in the narrative) both for the sake of its lively social sketches—including that of the able painter and singular personage, the late Sam Bough,—and because it is dated from the Isle of Earraid, celebrated alike in *Kidnapped* and in the essay *Memoirs of an Islet.*

Earraid, Thursday, August 5th, 1870.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I have so much to say, that needs must I take a large sheet; for the notepaper brings with

[1] Thomas Stevenson.

it a chilling brevity of style. Indeed, I think pleasant writing is proportional to the size of the material you write withal.

From Edinburgh to Greenock, I had the ex-secretary of the E.U. Conservative Club, Murdoch. At Greenock I spent a dismal evening, though I found a pretty walk. Next day on board the *Iona*, I had Maggie Thomson to Tarbet; Craig, a well-read, pleasant medical, to Ardrishaig; and Professor, Mrs., and all the little Fleeming Jenkinseses to Oban.

At Oban, that night, it was delicious. Mr. Stephenson's yacht lay in the bay, and a splendid band on board played delightfully. The waters of the bay were as smooth as a mill-pond; and, in the dusk, the black shadows of the hills stretched across to our very feet and the lights were reflected in long lines. At intervals, blue lights were burned on the water; and rockets were sent up. Sometimes great stars of clear fire fell from them, until the bay received and quenched them. I hired a boat and skulled round the yacht in the dark. When I came in, a very pleasant Englishman on the steps fell into talk with me, till it was time to go to bed.

Next morning I slept on or I should have gone to Glencoe. As it was, it was blazing hot; so I hired a boat, pulled all forenoon along the coast and had a delicious bathe on a beautiful white beach. Coming home, I *cotogai'd* my Englishman, lunched alongside of him and his sister, and took a walk with him in the afternoon, during which I find that he was travelling with a servant, kept horses, *et cetera*. At dinner he wished me to sit beside him and his sister; but there was no room. When he came out he told me why he was so *empressé* on this point. He had found out my name, and that I was connected with lighthouses, and his sister wished to know if I were any relative of the Stevenson in Ballantyne's *Lighthouse*. All evening, he, his sister, I, and Mr. Hargrove, of Hargrove and Fowler, sate in front of the hotel.

I asked Mr. H. if he knew who my friend was. "Yes," he said; "I never met him before: but my partner knows him. He is a man of old family; and the solicitor of highest standing about Sheffield." At night he said, "Now if you're down in my neighbourhood, you must pay me a visit. I am very fond of young men about me; and I should like a visit from you very much. I can take you through any factory in Sheffield and I'll drive you all about the *Dookeries*." He then wrote me down his address; and we parted huge friends, he still keeping me up to visiting him.

Hitherto, I had enjoyed myself amazingly; but to-day has been the crown. In the morning I met Bough on board, with whom I am both surprised and delighted. He and I have read the same books, and discuss Chaucer, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Fletcher, Webster, and all the old authors. He can quote verses by the page, and has really a very pretty literary taste. Altogether, with all his roughness and buffoonery, a more pleasant, clever fellow you may seldom see. I was very much surprised with him; and he with me. "Where the devil did you read all these books?" says he; and in my heart, I echo the question. One amusing thing I must say. We were both talking about travelling; and I said I was so fond of travelling alone, from the people one met and grew friendly with. "Ah," says he, "but you've such a pleasant manner, you know—quite captivated my old woman, you did—she couldn't talk of anything else." Here was a compliment, even in Sam Bough's sneering tones, that rather tickled my vanity; and really, my social successes of the last few days, the best of which is yet to come, are enough to turn anybody's head. To continue, after a little go in with Samuel, he going up on the bridge, I looked about me to see who there was; and mine eye lighted on two girls, one of whom was sweet and pretty, talking to an old gentleman. "*Eh bien*," says I to myself, "that seems the best investment on board." So I sidled

up to the old gentleman, got into conversation with him and so with the damsel; and thereupon, having used the patriarch as a ladder, I kicked him down behind me. Who should my damsel prove, but Amy Sinclair, daughter of Sir Tollemache. She certainly was the simplest, most naïve specimen of girlhood ever I saw. By getting brandy and biscuit and generally coaching up her cousin, who was sick, I ingratiated myself; and so kept her the whole way to Iona, taking her into the cave at Staffa and generally making myself as gallant as possible. I was never so much pleased with anything in my life, as her amusing absence of *mauvaise honte:* she was so sorry I wasn't going on to Oban again: didn't know how she could have enjoyed herself if I hadn't been there; and was so sorry we hadn't met on the Crinan. When we came back from Staffa, she and her aunt went down to have lunch; and a minute after up comes Miss Amy to ask me if I wouldn't think better of it, and take some lunch with them. I couldn't resist that, of course; so down I went; and there she displayed the full extent of her innocence. I must be sure to come to Thurso Castle the next time I was in Caithness, and Upper Norwood (whence she would take me all over the Crystal Palace) when I was near London; and (most complete of all) she offered to call on us in Edinburgh! Wasn't it delicious?—she is a girl of sixteen or seventeen, too, and the latter I think. I never yet saw a girl so innocent and fresh, so perfectly modest without the least trace of prudery.

Coming off Staffa, Sam Bough (who had been in huge force the whole time, drawing in Miss Amy's sketchbook and making himself agreeable or otherwise to everybody) pointed me out to a parson and said, "That's him." This was Alexander Ross and his wife.

The last stage of the steamer now approached, Miss Amy and I lamenting pathetically that Iona was so near. "People meet in this way," quoth she, "and then lose sight of one another so soon." We all landed together,

Bough and I and the Rosses with our baggage; and went together over the ruins. I was here left with the cousin and the aunt, during which I learned that said cousin sees me *every Sunday* in St. Stephen's. Oho! thought I, at the "every." The aunt was very anxious to know who that strange, wild man was? (didn't I wish Samuel in Tophet!). Of course, in reply, I drew it strong about eccentric genius and my never having known him before, and a good deal that was perhaps "strained to the extremest limit of the fact."

The steamer left, and Miss Amy and her cousin waved their handkerchiefs, until my arm in answering them was nearly broken. I believe women's arms must be better made for this exercise: mine ache still; and I regretted at the time that the handkerchief had seen service. Altogether, however, I was left in a pleasant frame of mind.

Being thus left alone, Bough, I, the Rosses, Professor Blackie, and an Englishman called M——: these people were going to remain the night, except the Professor, who is resident there at present. They were going to dine *en compagnie* and wished us to join the party; but we had already committed ourselves by mistake to the wrong hotel, and besides, we wished to be off as soon as wind and tide were against us to Earraid. We went up; Bough selected a place for sketching and blocked in the sketch for Mrs. R.; and we all talked together. Bough told us his family history and a lot of strange things about old Cumberland life; among others, how he had known "John Peel" of pleasant memory in song, and of how that worthy hunted. At five, down we go to the Argyll Hotel, and wait dinner. Broth—"nice broth"—fresh herrings, and fowl had been promised. At 5.50, I get the shovel and tongs and drum them at the stair-head till a response comes from below that the nice broth is at hand. I boast of my engineering, and Bough compares me to the Abbot of Arbroath who originated the Inchcape Bell. At last,

in comes the tureen and the hand-maid lifts the cover. "Rice soup!" I yell; "O no! none o' that for me!"—"Yes," says Bough savagely; "but Miss Amy didn't take *me* downstairs to eat salmon." Accordingly he is helped. How his face fell. "I imagine myself in the accident ward of the Infirmary," quoth he. It was, purely and simply, rice and water. After this, we have another weary pause, and then herrings in a state of mash and potatoes like iron. "Send the potatoes out to Prussia for grape-shot," was the suggestion. I dined off broken herrings and dry bread. At last "the supreme moment comes," and the fowl in a lordly dish is carried in. On the cover being raised, there is something so forlorn and miserable about the aspect of the animal that we both roar with laughter. Then Bough, taking up knife and fork, turns the "swarry" over and over, shaking doubtfully his head. "There's an aspect of quiet resistance about the beggar," says he, "that looks bad." However, to work he falls until the sweat stands on his brow and a dismembered leg falls, dull and leaden-like, on to my dish. To eat it was simply impossible. I did not know before that flesh could be so tough. "The strongest jaws in England," says Bough piteously, harpooning his dry morsel, "couldn't eat this leg in less than twelve hours." Nothing for it now, but to order boat and bill. "That fowl," says Bough to the landlady, "is of a breed I know. I knew the cut of its jib whenever it was put down. That was the grandmother of the cock that frightened Peter."—"I thought it was a historical animal," says I. "What a shame to kill it. It's as bad as eating Whittington's cat or the Dog of Montargis."—"Na—na, it's no so old," says the landlady, "but it eats hard."—"Eats!" I cry, "where do you find that? Very little of that verb with us." So with more raillery, we pay six shillings for our festival and run over to Earraid, shaking the dust of the Argyll Hotel from off our feet.

I can write no more just now, and I hope you will be

able to decipher so much ; for it contains matter. Really, the whole of yesterday's work would do in a novel without one little bit of embellishment ; and, indeed, few novels are so amusing. Bough, Miss Amy, Mrs. Ross, Blackie, M—— the parson—all these were such distinct characters, the incidents were so entertaining, and the scenery so fine, that the whole would have made a novelist's fortune.

MY DEAR FATHER,—No landing to-day, as the sea runs high on the rock. They are at the second course of the first story on the rock. I have as yet had no time here ; so this is α and ω of my business news.—Your affectionate son, R. L. STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Churchill Babington

This is addressed to a favourite cousin of the Balfour clan, married to a Cambridge colleague of mine, Professor Churchill Babington of learned and amiable memory, whose home was at the college living of Cockfield near Bury St. Edmunds. Here Stevenson had visited them in the previous year. "Mrs. Hutchinson" is, of course, Lucy Hutchinson's famous *Life* of her husband the regicide.

[*Swanston Cottage, Lothianburn, Summer* 1871.]

MY DEAR MAUD,—If you have forgotten the handwriting —as is like enough—you will find the name of a former correspondent (don't know how to spell that word) at the end. I have begun to write to you before now, but always stuck somehow, and left it to drown in a drawerful of like fiascos. This time I am determined to carry through, though I have nothing specially to say.

We look fairly like summer this morning ; the trees are blackening out of their spring greens ; the warmer suns have melted the hoarfrost of daisies of the paddock ; and the blackbird, I fear, already beginning to "stint his pipe of mellower days"—which is very apposite (I can't spell anything to-day—*one* p or *two* ?) and pretty. All

the same, we have been having shocking weather—cold winds and grey skies.

I have been reading heaps of nice books; but I can't go back so far. I am reading Clarendon's *Hist. Rebell.* at present, with which I am more pleased than I expected, which is saying a good deal. It is a pet idea of mine that one gets more real truth out of one avowed partisan than out of a dozen of your sham impartialists—wolves in sheep's clothing—simpering honesty as they suppress documents. After all, what one wants to know is not what people did, but why they did it—or rather, why they *thought* they did it; and to learn that, you should go to the men themselves. Their very falsehood is often more than another man's truth.

I have possessed myself of Mrs. Hutchinson, which, of course, I admire, etc. But is there not an irritating deliberation and correctness about her and everybody connected with her? If she would only write bad grammar, or forget to finish a sentence, or do something or other that looks fallible, it would be a relief. I sometimes wish the old Colonel had got drunk and beaten her, in the bitterness of my spirit. I know I felt a weight taken off my heart when I heard he was extravagant. It is quite possible to be too good for this evil world; and unquestionably, Mrs. Hutchinson was. The way in which she talks of herself makes one's blood run cold. There—I am glad to have got that out—but don't say it to anybody—seal of secrecy.

Please tell Mr. Babington that I have never forgotten one of his drawings—a Rubens, I think—a woman holding up a model ship. That woman had more life in her than ninety per cent. of the lame humans that you see crippling about this earth.

By the way, that is a feature in art which seems to have come in with the Italians. Your old Greek statues have scarce enough vitality in them to keep their monstrous bodies fresh withal. A shrewd country attorney,

in a turned white neckcloth and rusty blacks, would just take one of these Agamemnons and Ajaxes quietly by his beautiful, strong arm, trot the unresisting statue down a little gallery of legal shams, and turn the poor fellow out at the other end, "naked, as from the earth he came." There is more latent life, more of the coiled spring in the sleeping dog, about a recumbent figure of Michael Angelo's than about the most excited of Greek statues. The very marble seems to wrinkle with a wild energy that we never feel except in dreams.

I think this letter has turned into a sermon, but I had nothing interesting to talk about.

I do wish you and Mr. Babington would think better of it and come north this summer. We should be so glad to see you both. *Do* reconsider it.—Believe me, my dear Maud, ever your most affectionate cousin,

LOUIS STEVENSON.

To ALISON CUNNINGHAM

The following is the first which has been preserved of many letters to the admirable nurse whose care, during his ailing childhood, had done so much both to preserve Stevenson's life and awaken his love of tales and poetry, and of whom until his death he thought with the utmost constancy of affection. The letter bears no sign of date or place, but by the handwriting would seem to belong to this year :—

1871 ?

MY DEAR CUMMY,—I was greatly pleased by your letter in many ways. Of course, I was glad to hear from you ; you know, you and I have so many old stories between us, that even if there was nothing else, even if there was not a very sincere respect and affection, we should always be glad to pass a nod. I say, "even if there was not." But you know right well there is. Do not suppose that I shall ever forget those long, bitter nights, when I coughed and coughed and was so unhappy, and you were so patient and loving with a poor, sick child.

Indeed, Cummy, I wish I might become a man worth talking of, if it were only that you should not have thrown away your pains.

Happily, it is not the result of our acts that makes them brave and noble, but the acts themselves and the unselfish love that moved us to do them. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these." My dear old nurse, and you know there is nothing a man can say nearer his heart except his mother or his wife—my dear old nurse, God will make good to you all the good that you have done, and mercifully forgive you all the evil. And next time when the spring comes round, and everything is beginning once again, if you should happen to think that you might have had a child of your own, and that it was hard you should have spent so many years taking care of some one else's prodigal, just you think this—you have been for a great deal in my life; you have made much that there is in me, just as surely as if you had conceived me; and there are sons who are more ungrateful to their own mothers than I am to you. For I am not ungrateful, my dear Cummy, and it is with a very sincere emotion that I write myself your little boy,

LOUIS.

TO CHARLES BAXTER

After a winter of troubled health, Stevenson had gone to Dunblane for a change in early spring; and thence writes to his college companion and lifelong friend, Mr. Charles Baxter:—

Dunblane, Friday, 5th March 1872.

MY DEAR BAXTER,—By the date you may perhaps understand the purport of my letter without any words wasted about the matter. I cannot walk with you to-morrow, and you must not expect me. I came yesterday afternoon to Bridge of Allan, and have been very happy ever since, as every place is sanctified by the eighth sense, Memory. I walked up here this morning (three miles,

tu-dieu! a good stretch for me), and passed one of my favourite places in the world, and one that I very much affect in spirit when the body is tied down and brought immovably to anchor on a sickbed. It is a meadow and bank on a corner on the river, and is connected in my mind inseparably with Virgil's *Eclogues. Hic corulis mistos inter consedimus ulmos*, or something very like that, the passage begins (only I know my short-winded Latinity must have come to grief over even this much of quotation); and here, to a wish, is just such a cavern as Menalcas might shelter himself withal from the bright noon, and, with his lips curled backward, pipe himself blue in the face, while *Messieurs les Arcadiens* would roll out those cloying hexameters that sing themselves in one's mouth to such a curious lilting chant.

In such weather one has the bird's need to whistle; and I, who am specially incompetent in this art, must content myself by chattering away to you on this bit of paper. All the way along I was thanking God that he had made me and the birds and everything just as they are and not otherwise; for although there was no sun, the air was so thrilled with robins and blackbirds that it made the heart tremble with joy, and the leaves are far enough forward on the underwood to give a fine promise for the future. Even myself, as I say, I would not have had changed in one *iota* this forenoon, in spite of all my idleness and Guthrie's lost paper, which is ever present with me—a horrible phantom.

No one can be alone at home or in a quite new place. Memory and you must go hand in hand with (at least) decent weather if you wish to cook up a proper dish of solitude. It is in these little flights of mine that I get more pleasure than in anything else. Now, at present, I am supremely uneasy and restless—almost to the extent of pain; but O! how I enjoy it, and how I *shall* enjoy it afterwards (please God), if I get years enough allotted to me for the thing to ripen in. When I am a very old

and very respectable citizen with white hair and bland manners and a gold watch, I shall hear three crows cawing in my heart, as I heard them this morning: I vote for old age and eighty years of retrospect. Yet, after all, I dare say, a short shrift and a nice green grave are about as desirable.

Poor devil! how I am wearying you! Cheer up. Two pages more, and my letter reaches its term, for I have no more paper. What delightful things inns and waiters and bagmen are! If we didn't travel now and then, we should forget what the feeling of life is. The very cushion of a railway carriage—"the things restorative to the touch." I can't write, confound it! That's because I am so tired with my walk. . . . Believe me, ever your affectionate friend, R. L. STEVENSON.

TO CHARLES BAXTER

The "Spec." is, of course, the famous and historical debating society (the Speculative Society) of Edinburgh University, to which Stevenson had been elected on the strength of his conversational powers, and to whose meetings he contributed several essays.

Dunblane, Tuesday, 9th April 1872.

MY DEAR BAXTER,—I don't know what you mean. I know nothing about the Standing Committee of the Spec., did not know that such a body existed, and even if it doth exist, must sadly repudiate all association with such "goodly fellowship." I am a "Rural Voluptuary" at present. *That* is what is the matter with me. The Spec. may go whistle. As for "C. Baxter, Esq.," who is he? "One Baxter, or Bagster, a secretary," I say to mine acquaintance, "is at present disquieting my leisure with certain illegal, uncharitable, unchristian, and unconstitutional documents called *Business Letters: The affair is in the hands of the Police.*" Do you hear *that*, you evildoer? Sending business letters is surely a far more hateful and slimy degree of wickedness than sending

threatening letters; the man who throws grenades and torpedoes is less malicious; the Devil in red-hot hell rubs his hands with glee as he reckons up the number that go forth spreading pain and anxiety with each delivery of the post.

I have been walking to-day by a colonnade of beeches along the brawling Allan. My character for sanity is quite gone, seeing that I cheered my lonely way with the following, in a triumphant chaunt: "Thank God for the grass, and the fir-trees, and the crows, and the sheep, and the sunshine, and the shadows of the fir-trees." I hold that he is a poor mean devil who can walk alone, in such a place and in such weather, and doesn't set up his lungs and cry back to the birds and the river. Follow, follow, follow me. Come hither, come hither, come hither—here shall you see—no enemy—except a very slight remnant of winter and its rough weather. My bedroom, when I awoke this morning, was full of bird-songs, which is the greatest pleasure in life. Come hither, come hither, come hither, and when you come bring the third part of the *Earthly Paradise;* you can get it for me in Elliot's for two and tenpence (2s. 10d.) (*business habits*). Also bring an ounce of honeydew from Wilson's.

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

In the previous year, 1871, it had become apparent that Stevenson was neither fitted by bodily health nor by inclination for the family profession of civil engineer. Accordingly his summer excursions were no longer to the harbour works and lighthouses of Scotland, but to the ordinary scenes of holiday travel abroad.

Brussels, Thursday, 25*th July* 1872.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am here at last, sitting in my room, without coat or waistcoat, and with both window and door open, and yet perspiring like a terra-cotta jug or a Gruyère cheese.

We had a very good passage, which we certainly

deserved, in compensation for having to sleep on the cabin floor, and finding absolutely nothing fit for human food in the whole filthy embarkation. We made up for lost time by sleeping on deck a good part of the forenoon. When I woke, Simpson was still sleeping the sleep of the just, on a coil of ropes and (as appeared afterwards) his own hat; so I got a bottle of Bass and a pipe and laid hold of an old Frenchman of somewhat filthy aspect (*fiat experimentum in corpore vili*) to try my French upon. I made very heavy weather of it. The Frenchman had a very pretty young wife; but my French always deserted me entirely when I had to answer her, and so she soon drew away and left me to her lord, who talked of French politics, Africa, and domestic economy with great vivacity. From Ostend a smoking-hot journey to Brussels. At Brussels we went off after dinner to the Parc. If any person wants to be happy, I should advise the Parc. You sit drinking iced drinks and smoking penny cigars under great old trees. The band place, covered walks, etc., are all lit up. And you can't fancy how beautiful was the contrast of the great masses of lamplit foliage and the dark sapphire night sky with just one blue star set overhead in the middle of the largest patch. In the dark walks, too, there are crowds of people whose faces you cannot see, and here and there a colossal white statue at the corner of an alley that gives the place a nice, *artificial*, eighteenth century sentiment. There was a good deal of summer lightning blinking overhead, and the black avenues and white statues leapt out every minute into short-lived distinctness.

I get up to add one thing more. There is in the hotel a boy in whom I take the deepest interest. I cannot tell you his age, but the very first time I saw him (when I was at dinner yesterday) I was very much struck with his appearance. There is something very leonine in his face, with a dash of the negro especially, if I remember aright, in the mouth. He has a great quantity of dark

hair, curling in great rolls, not in little corkscrews, and a pair of large, dark, and very steady, bold, bright eyes. His manners are those of a prince. I felt like an overgrown ploughboy beside him. He speaks English perfectly, but with, I think, sufficient foreign accent to stamp him as a Russian, especially when his manners are taken into account. I don't think I ever saw any one who looked like a hero before. After breakfast this morning I was talking to him in the court, when he mentioned casually that he had caught a snake in the Riesengebirge. "I have it here," he said; "would you like to see it?" I said yes; and putting his hand into his breast-pocket, he drew forth not a dried serpent skin, but the head and neck of the reptile writhing and shooting out its horrible tongue in my face. You may conceive what a fright I got. I send off this single sheet just now in order to let you know I am safe across; but you must not expect letters often.

R. L. Stevenson.

P.S.—The snake was about a yard long, but harmless, and now, he says, quite tame.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

Hotel Landsberg, Frankfurt,
Monday, 29th July 1872.

. . . Last night I met with rather an amusing adventurette. Seeing a church door open, I went in, and was led by most importunate finger-bills up a long stair to the top of the tower. The father smoking at the door, the mother and the three daughters received me as if I was a friend of the family and had come in for an evening visit. The youngest daughter (about thirteen, I suppose, and a pretty little girl) had been learning English at the school, and was anxious to play it off upon a real, veritable Englander; so we had a long talk, and I was shown

photographs, etc., Marie and I talking, and the others looking on with evident delight at having such a linguist in the family. As all my remarks were duly translated and communicated to the rest, it was quite a good German lesson. There was only one contretemps during the whole interview—the arrival of another visitor, in the shape (surely) the last of God's creatures, a wood-worm of the most unnatural and hideous appearance, with one great striped horn sticking out of his nose like a boltsprit, If there are many wood-worms in Germany, I shall come home. The most courageous men in the world must be entomologists. I had rather be a lion-tamer.

To-day I got rather a curiosity—*Lieder und Balladen von Robert Burns*, translated by one Silbergleit, and not so ill done either. Armed with which, I had a swim in the Main, and then bread and cheese and Bavarian beer in a sort of café, or at least the German substitute for a café; but what a falling off after the heavenly forenoons in Brussels!

I have bought a meerschaum out of local sentiment, and am now very low and nervous about the bargain, having paid dearer than I should in England, and got a worse article, if I can form a judgment.

Do write some more, somebody. To-morrow I expect I shall go into lodgings, as this hotel work makes the money disappear like butter in a furnace.—Meanwhile believe me, ever your affectionate son,

R. L. STEVENSON.

TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

Hotel Landsberg, Thursday, 1st August 1872.

. . . YESTERDAY I walked to Eckenheim, a village a little way out of Frankfurt, and turned into the alehouse. In the room, which was just such as it would have been in Scotland, were the landlady, two neighbours, and an old peasant eating raw sausage at the far end. I soon

got into conversation; and was astonished when the landlady, having asked whether I were an Englishman, and received an answer in the affirmative, proceeded to inquire further whether I were not also a Scotchman. It turned out that a Scotch doctor—a professor—a poet —who wrote books—*gross wie das*—had come nearly every day out of Frankfurt to the *Eckenheimer Wirthschaft*, and had left behind him a most savoury memory in the hearts of all its customers. One man ran out to find his name for me, and returned with the news that it was *Cobie* (Scobie, I suspect); and during his absence the rest were pouring into my ears the fame and acquirements of my countryman. He was, in some undecipherable manner, connected with the Queen of England and one of the Princesses. He had been in Turkey, and had there married a wife of immense wealth. They could find apparently no measure adequate to express the size of his books. In one way or another, he had amassed a princely fortune, and had apparently only one sorrow, his daughter to wit, who had absconded into a *Kloster*, with a considerable slice of the mother's *Geld*. I told them we had no Klosters in Scotland, with a certain feeling of superiority. No more had they, I was told—"*Hier ist unser Kloster!*" and the speaker motioned with both arms round the taproom. Although the first torrent was exhausted, yet the Doctor came up again in all sorts of ways, and with or without occasion, throughout the whole interview; as, for example, when one man, taking his pipe out of his mouth and shaking his head, remarked *àpropos* of nothing and with almost defiant conviction, "*Er war ein feiner Mann, der Herr Doctor*," and was answered by another with "*Yaw, yaw, und trank immer rothen Wein.*"

Setting aside the Doctor, who had evidently turned the brains of the entire village, they were intelligent people. One thing in particular struck me, their honesty in admitting that here they spoke bad German, and advising me to go to Coburg or Leipsic for German.—"*Sie sprechen da*

rein" (clean), said one; and they all nodded their heads together like as many mandarins, and repeated *rein, so rein* in chorus.

Of course we got upon Scotland. The hostess said, "*Die Schottländer trinken gern Schnapps*," which may be freely translated, "Scotchmen are horrid fond of whisky." It was impossible, of course, to combat such a truism; and so I proceeded to explain the construction of toddy, interrupted by a cry of horror when I mentioned the *hot* water; and thence, as I find is always the case, to the most ghastly romancing about Scottish scenery and manners, the Highland dress, and everything national or local that I could lay my hands upon. Now that I have got my German Burns, I lean a good deal upon him for opening a conversation, and read a few translations to every yawning audience that I can gather. I am grown most insufferably national, you see. I fancy it is a punishment for my want of it at ordinary times. Now, what do you think, there was a waiter in this very hotel, but, alas! he is now gone, who sang (from morning to night, as my informant said with a shrug at the recollection) what but *'s ist lange her*, the German version of Auld Lang Syne; so you see, madame, the finest lyric ever written *will* make its way out of whatsoever corner of patois it found its birth in.

"*Mein Herz ist im Hochland, mein Herz ist nicht hier,*
Mein Herz ist im Hochland im grünen Revier.
Im grünen Reviere zu jagen das Reh;
Mein Herz ist im Hochland, wo immer ich geh."

I don't think I need translate that for you.

There is one thing that burthens me a good deal in my patriotic garrulage, and that is the black ignorance in which I grope about everything, as, for example, when I gave yesterday a full and, I fancy, a startlingly incorrect account of Scotch education to a very stolid German on a garden bench: he sat and perspired under it, however, with much composure. I am generally glad enough

to fall back again, after these political interludes, upon Burns, toddy, and the Highlands.

I go every night to the theatre, except when there is no opera. I cannot stand a play yet; but I am already very much improved, and can understand a good deal of what goes on.

Friday, August 2, 1872.—In the evening, at the theatre, I had a great laugh. Lord Allcash in *Fra Diavolo*, with his white hat, red guide-books, and bad German, was the *pièce-de-résistance* from a humorous point of view; and I had the satisfaction of knowing that in my own small way I could minister the same amusement whenever I chose to open my mouth.

I am just going off to do some German with Simpson. —Your affectionate son, R. L. Stevenson.

To Thomas Stevenson

Frankfurt, Rosengasse 13, *August* 4, 1872.

my dear father,—You will perceive by the head of this page that we have at last got into lodgings, and powerfully mean ones too. If I were to call the street anything but *shady*, I should be boasting. The people sit at their doors in shirt-sleeves, smoking as they do in Seven Dials of a Sunday.

Last night we went to bed about ten, for the first time *householders* in Germany—real Teutons, with no deception, spring, or false bottom. About half-past one there began such a trumpeting, shouting, pealing of bells, and scurrying hither and thither of feet as woke every person in Frankfurt out of their first sleep with a vague sort of apprehension that the last day was at hand. The whole street was alive, and we could hear people talking in their rooms, or crying to passers-by from their windows, all around us. At last I made out what a man was saying

in the next room. It was a fire in Sachsenhausen, he said (Sachsenhausen is the suburb on the other side of the Main), and he wound up with one of the most tremendous falsehoods on record, "*Hier alles ruht*—here all is still." If it can be said to be still in an engine factory, or in the stomach of a volcano when it is meditating an eruption, he might have been justified in what he said, but not otherwise. The tumult continued unabated for near an hour; but as one grew used to it, it gradually resolved itself into three bells, answering each other at short intervals across the town, a man shouting at ever shorter intervals and with superhuman energy, "*Feuer—im Sachsenhausen*," and the almost continuous winding of all manner of bugles and trumpets, sometimes in stirring flourishes, and sometimes in mere tuneless wails. Occasionally there was another rush of feet past the window, and once there was a mighty drumming, down between us and the river, as though the soldiery were turning out to keep the peace. This was all we had of the fire, except a great cloud, all flushed red with the glare, above the roofs on the other side of the Gasse; but it was quite enough to put me entirely off my sleep and make me keenly alive to three or four gentlemen who were strolling leisurely about my person, and every here and there leaving me somewhat as a keepsake. . . . However, everything has its compensation, and when day came at last, and the sparrows awoke with trills and *carol-ets*, the dawn seemed to fall on me like a sleeping draught. I went to the window and saw the sparrows about the eaves, and a great troop of doves go strolling up the paven Gasse, seeking what they may devour. And so to sleep, despite fleas and fire-alarms, and clocks chiming the hours out of neighbouring houses at all sorts of odd times and with the most charming want of unanimity.

We have got settled down in Frankfurt, and like the place very much. Simpson and I seem to get on very well together. We suit each other capitally; and it is

an awful joke to be living (two would-be advocates, and one a baronet) in this supremely mean abode.

The abode is, however, a great improvement on the hotel, and I think we shall grow quite fond of it.—Ever your affectionate son, R. L. Stevenson.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

13 *Rosengasse, Frankfurt,*
Tuesday Morning, August 1872.

. . . Last night I was at the theatre and heard *Die Judin* (*La Juive*), and was thereby terribly excited. At last, in the middle of the fifth act, which was perfectly beastly, I had to slope. I could stand even seeing the cauldron with the sham fire beneath, and the two hateful executioners in red ; but when at last the girl's courage breaks down, and, grasping her father's arm, she cries out—O so shudderfully !—I thought it high time to be out of that *galère*, and so I do not know yet whether it ends well or ill ; but if I ever afterwards find that they do carry things to the extremity, I shall think more meanly of my species. It was raining and cold outside, so I went into a *Bierhalle*, and sat and brooded over a *Schnitt* (half-glass) for nearly an hour. An opera is far more *real* than real life to me. It seems as if stage illusion, and particularly this hardest to swallow and most conventional illusion of them all—an opera—would never stale upon me. I wish that life was an opera. I should like to *live* in one ; but I don't know in what quarter of the globe I shall find a society so constituted. Besides, it would soon pall : imagine asking for three-kreuzer cigars in recitative, or giving the washerwoman the inventory of your dirty clothes in a sustained and *flourishous* aria.

I am in a right good mood this morning to sit here and write to you ; but not to give you news. There is a great stir of life, in a quiet, almost country fashion, all about us here. Some one is hammering a beef-steak in the

rez-de-chaussée: there is a great clink of pitchers and noise of the pump-handle at the public well in the little square-kin round the corner. The children, all seemingly within a month, and certainly none above five, that always go halting and stumbling up and down the roadway, are ordinarily very quiet, and sit sedately puddling in the gutter, trying, I suppose, poor little devils! to understand their *Mutter-sprache;* but they, too, make themselves heard from time to time in little incomprehensible antiphonies, about the drift that comes down to them by their rivers from the strange lands higher up the Gasse. Above all, there is here such a twittering of canaries (I can see twelve out of our window), and such continual visitation of grey doves and big-nosed sparrows, as make our little bye-street into a perfect aviary.

I look across the Gasse at our opposite neighbour, as he dandles his baby about, and occasionally takes a spoonful or two of some pale slimy nastiness that looks like *dead porridge*, if you can take the conception. These two are his only occupations. All day long you can hear him singing over the brat when he is not eating; or see him eating when he is not keeping baby. Besides which, there comes into his house a continual round of visitors that puts me in mind of the luncheon hour at home. As he has thus no ostensible avocation, we have named him "the W.S." to give a flavour of respectability to the street.

Enough of the Gasse. The weather is here much colder. It rained a good deal yesterday; and though it is fair and sunshiny again to-day, and we can still sit, of course, with our windows open, yet there is no more excuse for the siesta; and the bathe in the river, except for cleanliness, is no longer a necessity of life. The Main is very swift. In one part of the baths it is next door to impossible to swim against it, and I suspect that, out in the open, it would be quite impossible.—Adieu, my dear mother, and believe me, ever your affectionate son,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
(*Rentier*).

To Charles Baxter

On the way home with Sir Walter Simpson from Germany. The L.J.R. herein mentioned was a short-lived Essay Club of only six members; its meetings were held in a public-house in Advocate's Close; the meaning of its initials (as recently divulged by Mr. Baxter) was Liberty, Justice, Reverence; no doubt understood by the members in some fresh and esoteric sense of their own.

Boulogne Sur Mer, Wednesday,
3rd or 4th September 1872.

Blame me not that this epistle
Is the first you have from me.
Idleness has held me fettered,
But at last the times are bettered
And once more I wet my whistle
Here, in France beside the sea.

All the green and idle weather
I have had in sun and shower,
Such an easy warm subsistence,
Such an indolent existence
I should find it hard to sever
Day from day and hour from hour.

Many a tract-provided ranter
May upbraid me, dark and sour,
Many a bland Utilitarian
Or excited Millenarian,
—"*Pereunt et imputantur*
You must speak to every hour."

But (the very term's deceptive)
You at least, my friend, will see,
That in sunny grassy meadows
Trailed across by moving shadows
To be actively receptive
Is as much as man can be.

He that all the winter grapples
Difficulties, thrust and ward—
Needs to cheer him thro' his duty
Memories of sun and beauty
Orchards with the russet apples
Lying scattered on the sward.

Many such I keep in prison,
Keep them here at heart unseen,
Till my muse again rehearses
Long years hence, and in my verses
You shall meet them rearisen
Ever comely, ever green.

You know how they never perish,
How, in time of later art,
Memories consecrate and sweeten
These defaced and tempest-beaten
Flowers of former years we cherish,
Half a life, against our heart.

Most, those love-fruits withered greenly,
Those frail, sickly amourettes,
How they brighten with the distance
Take new strength and new existence
Till we see them sitting queenly
Crowned and courted by regrets!

All that loveliest and best is,
Aureole-fashion round their head,
They that looked in life but plainly,
How they stir our spirits vainly
When they come to us Alcestis-
like returning from the dead!

Not the old love but another,
Bright she comes at Memory's call
Our forgotten vows reviving
To a newer, livelier living,
As the dead child to the mother
Seems the fairest child of all.

Thus our Goethe, sacred master,
Travelling backward thro' his youth,
Surely wandered wrong in trying
To renew the old, undying
Loves that cling in memory faster
Than they ever lived in truth.

So; *en voilà assez de mauvais vers.* Let us finish with a word or two in honest prose, tho' indeed I shall so soon be back again and, if you be in town as I hope, so soon get linked again down the Lothian road by a cigar or two and a liquor, that it is perhaps scarce worth the postage to send my letter on before me. I have just been long enough away to be satisfied and even anxious to get home again and talk the matter over with my friends. I shall have plenty to tell you; and principally plenty that I do not care to write; and I daresay, you, too, will have a lot of gossip. What about Ferrier? Is the L.J.R. think you to go naked and unashamed this winter? He with his charming idiosyncrasy was in my eyes the vine-leaf that preserved our self-respect. All the rest of us are such shadows, compared to his full-flavoured personality; but I must not spoil my own *début.* I am trenching upon one of the essayettes which I propose to introduce as a novelty this year before that august assembly. For we must not let it die. It is a sickly baby, but what with nursing, and pap, and the like, I do not see why it should not have a stout manhood after all, and perhaps a green old age. Eh! when we are old (if we ever should be) that too will be one of those cherished memories I

have been so rhapsodizing over. We must consecrate our room. We must make it a museum of bright recollections; so that we may go back there white-headed, and say "Vixi." After all, new countries, sun, music, and all the rest can never take down our gusty, rainy, smoky, grim old city out of the first place that it has been making for itself in the bottom of my soul, by all pleasant and hard things that have befallen me for these past twenty years or so. My heart is buried there—say, in Advocate's Close!

Simpson and I got on very well together, and made a very suitable pair. I like him much better than I did when I started which was almost more than I hoped for.

If you should chance to see Bob, give him my news or if you have the letter about you, let him see it.—Ever your Affct. friend, R. L. STEVENSON.

To Charles Baxter

Through the jesting tenor of this letter is to be discerned a vein of more than half serious thinking very characteristic of R. L. S. alike as youth and man.

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh, October* 1872.

MY DEAR BAXTER,—I am gum-boiled and face swollen to an unprecedented degree. It is very depressing to suffer from gibber that cannot be brought to a head. I cannot speak it, because my face is so swollen and stiff that enunciation must be deliberate—a thing your true gibberer cannot hold up his head under; and writ gibber is somehow not gibber at all, it does not come forth, does not *flow*, with that fine irrational freedom that it loves in speech—it does not afford relief to the packed bosom.

Hence I am suffering from *suppressed gibber*—an uneasy complaint; and like all cases of suppressed humours, this hath a nasty tendency to the brain. Therefore (the more confused I get, the more I lean on Thus's and Hences and Therefores) you must not be down upon me, most

noble Festus, altho' this letter should smack of some infirmity of judgment. I speak the words of soberness and truth; and would you were not almost but altogether as I am, except this swelling. Lord, Lord, if we could change personalities how we should hate it. How I should rebel at the office, repugn under the Ulster coat, and repudiate your monkish humours thus unjustly and suddenly thrust upon poor, infidel me! And as for you —why, my dear Charles, "a mouse that hath its lodging in a cat's ear" would not be so uneasy as you in your new conditions. I do not see how your temperament would come thro' the feverish longings to do things that cannot then (or perhaps ever) be accomplished, the feverish unrests and damnable indecisions, that it takes all my easy-going spirits to come through. A vane can live out anything in the shape of a wind; and that is how I can be, and am, a more serious person than you. Just as the light French seemed very serious to Sterne, light L. Stevenson can afford to bob about over the top of any deep sea of prospect or retrospect, where ironclad C. Baxter would incontinently go down with all hands. A fool is generally the wisest person out. The wise man must shut his eyes to all the perils and horrors that lie round him; but the cap and bells can go bobbing along the most slippery ledges and the bauble will not stir up sleeping lions. Hurray! for motley, for a good sound *insouciance*, for a healthy philosophic carelessness!

My dear Baxter, a word in your ear—"DON'T YOU WISH YOU WERE A FOOL?" How easy the world would go on with you—literally on castors. The only reason a wise man can assign for getting drunk is that he wishes to enjoy for a while the blessed immunities and sunshiny weather of the land of fooldom. But a fool, who dwells ever there, has no excuse at all. *That* is a happy land, if you like—and not so far away either. Take a fool's advice and let us strive without ceasing to get into it. Hark in your ear again: "THEY ALLOW PEOPLE TO REASON

IN THAT LAND." I wish I could take you by the hand and lead you away into its pleasant boundaries. There is no custom-house on the frontier, and you may take in what books you will. There are no manners and customs; but men and women grow up, like trees in a still, well-walled garden, "at their own sweet will." There is no prescribed or customary folly—no motley, cap, or bauble: out of the well of each one's own innate absurdity he is allowed and encouraged freely to draw and to communicate; and it is a strange thing how this natural fooling comes so nigh to one's better thoughts of wisdom; and stranger still, that all this discord of people speaking in their own natural moods and keys, masses itself into a far more perfect harmony than all the dismal, official unison in which they sing in other countries. Part-singing seems best all the world over.

I who live in England must wear the hackneyed symbols of the profession, to show that I have (at least) consular immunities, coming as I do out of another land, where they are not so wise as they are here, but fancy that God likes what he makes and is not best pleased with us when we deface and dissemble all that he has given us and put about us to one common standard of—— Highty-Tighty!—when was a jester obliged to finish his sentence? I cut so strong a pirouette that all my bells jingle, and come down in an attitude, with one hand upon my hip. The evening's entertainment is over,—" and if our kyind friends——"

Hurrah! I feel relieved. I have put out my gibber, and if you have read thus far, you will have taken it in. I wonder if you will ever come this length. I shall try a trap for you, and insult you here, on this last page. "O Baxter what a damned humbug you are!" There,—shall this insult bloom and die unseen, or will you come toward me, when next we meet, with a face deformed with anger and demand speedy and bloody satisfaction. *Nous verrons*, which is French.

R. L. STEVENSON.

To Charles Baxter

In the winter of 1872–73 Stevenson was out of health again; and by the beginning of spring there began the trouble which for the next twelve months clouded his home life. The following shows exactly in what spirit he took it:—

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh,*
Sunday, February 2, 1873.

MY DEAR BAXTER,—The thunderbolt has fallen with a vengeance now. On Friday night after leaving you, in the course of conversation, my father put me one or two questions as to beliefs, which I candidly answered. I really hate all lying so much now—a new found honesty that has somehow come out of my late illness—that I could not so much as hesitate at the time; but if I had foreseen the real hell of everything since, I think I should have lied, as I have done so often before. I so far thought of my father, but I had forgotten my mother. And now! they are both ill, both silent, both as down in the mouth as if—I can find no simile. You may fancy how happy it is for me. If it were not too late, I think I could almost find it in my heart to retract, but it is too late; and again, am I to live my whole life as one falsehood? Of course, it is rougher than hell upon my father, but can I help it? They don't see either that my game is not the light-hearted scoffer; that I am not (as they call me) a careless infidel. I believe as much as they do, only generally in the inverse ratio: I am, I think, as honest as they can be in what I hold. I have not come hastily to my views. I reserve (as I told them) many points until I acquire fuller information, and do not think I am thus justly to be called "horrible atheist."

Now, what is to take place? What a curse I am to my parents! O Lord, what a pleasant thing it is to have just *damned* the happiness of (probably) the only two people who care a damn about you in the world.

What is my life to be at this rate? What, you rascal? Answer—I have a pistol at your throat. If all that I hold true and most desire to spread is to be such death, and worse than death, in the eyes of my father and mother, what the *devil* am I to do?

Here is a good heavy cross with a vengeance, and all rough with rusty nails that tear your fingers, only it is not I that have to carry it alone; I hold the light end, but the heavy burden falls on these two.

Don't—I don't know what I was going to say. I am an abject idiot, which, all things considered, is not remarkable.—Ever your affectionate and horrible atheist,

R. L. STEVENSON.

II

STUDENT DAYS—*Continued*

NEW FRIENDSHIPS—ORDERED SOUTH

July 1873–May 1874

The year 1873 was a critical one in Stevenson's life. Late in July he went for the second time to pay a visit to Cockfield Rectory, the pleasant Suffolk home of his cousin Mrs. Churchill Babington and her husband. Another guest at the same time was Mrs. Sitwell—now my wife—an intimate friend and connection by marriage of the hostess. I was shortly due to join the party, when Mrs. Sitwell wrote telling me of the "fine young spirit" she had found under her friend's roof, and suggesting that I should hasten my visit so as to make his acquaintance before he left. I came accordingly, and from that time on the fine young spirit became a leading interest both in her life and mine. He had thrown himself on her sympathies, in that troubled hour of his youth, with entire dependence almost from the first, and clung to her devotedly for the next two years as to an inspirer, consoler, and guide. Under her influence he began for the first time to see his way in life, and to believe hopefully and manfully in his own powers and future. To encourage such hopes further, and to lend what hand one could towards their fulfilment, became quickly one of the first of cares and pleasures. It was impossible not to recognise,

in this very un-academical type of Scottish youth, a spirit the most interesting and full of promise. His social charm was already at its height, and quite irresistible; but inwardly he was full of trouble and self-doubt. If he could steer himself or be steered safely through the difficulties of youth, and if he could learn to write with half the charm and genius that shone from his presence and conversation, there seemed room to hope for the highest from him. He went back to Edinburgh in the beginning of September full of new hope and heart. It had been agreed that while still reading, as his parents desired, for the bar, he should try seriously to get ready for publication some essays which he had already on hand—one on Walt Whitman, one on John Knox, one on Roads and the Spirit of the Road—and should so far as possible avoid topics of dispute in the home circle.

But after a while the news of him was not favourable. Those differences with his father, which had been weighing almost morbidly upon his high-strung nature, were renewed. By mid-October his letters told of failing health. He came to London, and instead of presenting himself, as had been proposed, to be examined for admission to one of the London Inns of Court, he was forced to consult the late Sir Andrew Clark, who found him suffering from acute nerve exhaustion, with some threat of danger to the lungs. He was ordered to break at once with Edinburgh for a time, and to spend the winter in a more soothing climate and surroundings. He went accordingly to Mentone, a place he had delighted in as a boy ten years before, and during a stay of six months made a slow, but for the time being a pretty complete, recovery. I visited him twice during the winter, and the second time found him coming fairly to himself again

in the southern peace and sunshine. He was busy with the essay *Ordered South*, and with that on *Victor Hugo's Romances*, which was afterwards his first contribution to the Cornhill Magazine; was full of a thousand dreams and projects for future work; and was passing his invalid days pleasantly meanwhile in the companionship of two kind and accomplished Russian ladies, who took to him warmly, and of their children. The following record of the time is drawn from his correspondence partly with his parents and partly with myself, but chiefly from the journal-letters, containing a full and intimate record of his daily moods and doings, which he was accustomed to send off weekly or oftener to Mrs. Sitwell.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

This is from his cousin's house in Suffolk. Some of the impressions then received of the contrasts between Scotland and England were later worked out in the essay *The Foreigner at Home*, printed at the head of *Memories and Portraits*:—

Cockfield Rectory, Sudbury, Suffolk,
Tuesday, July 28, 1873.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am too happy to be much of a correspondent. Yesterday we were away to Melford and Lavenham, both exceptionally placid, beautiful old English towns. Melford scattered all round a big green, with an Elizabethan Hall and Park, great screens of trees that seem twice as high as trees should seem, and everything else like what ought to be in a novel, and what one never expects to see in reality, made me cry out how good we were to live in Scotland, for the many hundredth time. I cannot get over my astonishment—indeed, it increases every day—at the hopeless gulf that there is between England and Scotland, and English and Scotch. Nothing is the same; and I feel as strange and outlandish here as I do in France or Germany. Everything by

the wayside, in the houses, or about the people, strikes me with an unexpected unfamiliarity: I walk among surprises, for just where you think you have them, something wrong turns up.

I got a little Law read yesterday, and some German this morning, but on the whole there are too many amusements going for much work; as for correspondence, I have neither heart nor time for it to-day. R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

After leaving Cockfield Stevenson spent a few days in London and a few with me in a cottage I then had at Norwood. This and the following letters were written in the next days after his return home. "Bob" in the last paragraph is Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson, an elder cousin to whom Louis had been from boyhood devotedly attached: afterwards known as the brilliant painter-critic and author of *Velasquez*, etc.

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh,*
Monday, September 1st, 1873.

I have arrived, as you see, without accident; but I never had a more wretched journey in my life. I could not settle to read anything; I bought Darwin's last book in despair, for I knew I could generally read Darwin, but it was a failure. However, the book served me in good stead; for when a couple of children got in at Newcastle, I struck up a great friendship with them on the strength of the illustrations. These two children (a girl of nine and a boy of six) had never before travelled in a railway, so that everything was a glory to them, and they were never tired of watching the telegraph posts and trees and hedges go racing past us to the tail of the train; and the girl I found quite entered into the most daring personifications that I could make. A little way on, about Alnmouth, they had their first sight of the sea; and it was wonderful how loath they were to believe that what they saw was water; indeed it was very still and grey and solid-looking under a sky to match. It was

worth the fare, yet a little farther on, to see the delight of the girl when she passed into "another country," with the black Tweed under our feet, crossed by the lamps of the passenger bridge. I remember the first time I had gone into "another country," over the same river from the other side.

Bob was not at the station when I arrived; but a friend of his brought me a letter; and he is to be in the first thing to-morrow. Do you know, I think yesterday and the day before were the two happiest days of my life? I would not have missed last month for eternity. —Ever yours, R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

The paper on *Roads* herein mentioned had been planned during walks at Cockfield; was offered to and rejected by the Saturday Review and ultimately accepted by Mr. Hamerton for the Portfolio; and was the first regular or paid contribution of Stevenson to periodical literature.

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh,*
Saturday, September 6, 1873.

I have been to-day a very long walk with my father through some of the most beautiful ways hereabouts; the day was cold with an iron, windy sky, and only glorified now and then with autumn sunlight. For it is fully autumn with us, with a blight already over the greens, and a keen wind in the morning that makes one rather timid of one's tub when it finds its way indoors.

I was out this evening to call on a friend, and, coming back through the wet, crowded, lamp-lit streets, was singing after my own fashion, "*Du hast Diamanten und Perlen,*" when I heard a poor cripple man in the gutter wailing over a pitiful Scotch air, his club-foot supported on the other knee, and his whole woebegone body propped sideways against a crutch. The nearest lamp threw a strong light on his worn, sordid face and the three boxes

of lucifer matches that he held for sale. My own false notes stuck in my chest. How well off I am! is the burthen of my songs all day long—"*Drum ist so wohl mir in der Welt!*" and the ugly reality of the cripple man was an intrusion on the beautiful world in which I was walking. He could no more sing than I could; and his voice was cracked and rusty, and altogether perished. To think that that wreck may have walked the streets some night years ago, as glad at heart as I was, and promising himself a future as golden and honourable!

Sunday, 11.20 *a.m.*—I wonder what you are doing now?—in church likely, at the *Te Deum*. Everything here is utterly silent. I can hear men's footfalls streets away; the whole life of Edinburgh has been sucked into sundry pious edifices; the gardens below my windows are steeped in a diffused sunlight, and every tree seems standing on tiptoes, strained and silent, as though to get its head above its neighbour's and *listen*. You know what I mean, don't you? How trees do seem silently to assert themselves on an occasion! I have been trying to write *Roads* until I feel as if I were standing on my head; but I mean *Roads*, and shall do something to them.

I wish I could make you feel the hush that is over everything, only made the more perfect by rare interruptions; and the rich, placid light, and the still autumnal foliage. Houses, you know, stand all about our gardens: solid, steady blocks of houses; all look empty and asleep.

Monday night.—The drums and fifes up in the castle are sounding the guard-call through the dark, and there is a great rattle of carriages without. I have had (I must tell you) my bed taken out of this room, so that I am alone in it with my books and two tables, and two chairs, and a coal-skuttle (or *scuttle*) (?) and a *débris* of broken pipes

in a corner, and my old school play-box, so full of papers and books that the lid will not shut down, standing reproachfully in the midst. There is something in it that is still a little gaunt and vacant; it needs a little populous disorder over it to give it the feel of homeliness, and perhaps a bit more furniture, just to take the edge off the sense of illimitable space, eternity, and a future state, and the like, that is brought home to one, even in this small attic, by the wide, empty floor.

You would require to know, what only I can ever know, many grim and many maudlin passages out of my past life to feel how great a change has been made for me by this past summer. Let me be ever so poor and thread-paper a soul, I am going to try for the best.

These good booksellers of mine have at last got a *Werther* without illustrations. I want you to like Charlotte. Werther himself has every feebleness and vice that could tend to make his suicide a most virtuous and commendable action; and yet I like Werther too—I don't know why, except that he has written the most delightful letters in the world. Note, by the way, the passage under date June 21st not far from the beginning; it finds a voice for a great deal of dumb, uneasy, pleasurable longing that we have all had, times without number. I looked that up the other day for *Roads*, so I know the reference; but you will find it a garden of flowers from beginning to end. All through the passion keeps steadily rising, from the thunderstorm at the country-house—there was thunder in that story too—up to the last wild delirious interview; either Lotte was no good at all, or else Werther should have remained alive after that; either he knew his woman too well, or else he was precipitate. But an idiot like that is hopeless; and yet, he wasn't an idiot—I make reparation, and will offer eighteen pounds of best wax at his tomb. Poor devil! he was only the weakest—or, at least, a very weak strong man. R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh,*
Friday, September 12, 1873.

. . . I was over last night, contrary to my own wish, in Leven, Fife; and this morning I had a conversation of which, I think, some account might interest you. I was up with a cousin who was fishing in a mill-lade, and a shower of rain drove me for shelter into a tumble-down steading attached to the mill. There I found a labourer cleaning a byre, with whom I fell into talk. The man was to all appearance as heavy, as *hébété*, as any English clodhopper; but I knew I was in Scotland, and launched out forthright into Education and Politics and the aims of one's life. I told him how I had found the peasantry in Suffolk, and added that their state had made me feel quite pained and down-hearted. "It but to do that," he said, "to onybody that thinks at a'!" Then, again, he said that he could not conceive how anything could daunt or cast down a man who had an aim in life. "They that have had a guid schoolin' and do nae mair, whatever they do, they have done; but him that has aye something ayont need never be weary." I have had to mutilate the dialect much, so that it might be comprehensible to you; but I think the sentiment will keep, even through a change of words, something of the heartsome ring of encouragement that it had for me: and that from a man cleaning a byre! You see what John Knox and his schools have done.

Saturday.—This has been a charming day for me from morning to now (5 P.M.). First, I found your letter, and went down and read it on a seat in those Public Gardens of which you have heard already. After lunch, my father and I went down to the coast and walked a little way along the shore between Granton and Cramond. This has always been with me a very favourite walk. The Firth

closes gradually together before you, the coast runs in a series of the most beautifully moulded bays, hill after hill, wooded and softly outlined, trends away in front till the two shores join together. When the tide is out there are great, gleaming flats of wet sand, over which the gulls go flying and crying; and every cape runs down into them with its little spit of wall and trees. We lay together a long time on the beach; the sea just babbled among the stones; and at one time we heard the hollow, sturdy beat of the paddles of an unseen steamer somewhere round the cape. I am glad to say that the peace of the day and scenery was not marred by any unpleasantness between us two.

I am, unhappily, off my style, and can do nothing well; indeed, I fear I have marred *Roads* finally by patching at it when I was out of the humour. Only, I am beginning to see something great about John Knox and Queen Mary; I like them both so much, that I feel as if I could write the history fairly.

Sunday.—It has rained and blown chilly out of the East all day. This was my first visit to church since the last Sunday at Cockfield. I was alone, and read the minor prophets and thought of the past all the time; a sentimental Calvinist preached—a very odd animal, as you may fancy—and to him I did not attend very closely. All afternoon I worked until half-past four, when I went out under an umbrella, and cruised about the empty, wet, glimmering streets until near dinner time.

I have finished *Roads* to-day, and send it off to you to see. The Lord knows whether it is worth anything!—some of it pleases me a good deal, but I fear it is quite unfit for any possible magazine. However, I wish you to see it, as you know the humour in which it was conceived, walking alone and very happily about the Suffolk highways and byeways on several splendid sunny afternoons.—Believe me, ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Monday.—I have looked over *Roads* again, and I am aghast at its feebleness. It is the trial of a very "'prentice hand" indeed. Shall I ever learn to do anything *well?* However, it shall go to you, for the reasons given above.

To Mrs. Sitwell

After an outpouring about difficulties at home.

Edinburgh, Tuesday, September 16, 1873.

. . . I MUST be very strong to have all this vexation and still to be well. I was weighed the other day, and the gross weight of my large person was eight stone six! Does it not seem surprising that I can keep the lamp alight, through all this gusty weather, in so frail a lantern? And yet it burns cheerily.

My mother is leaving for the country this morning, and my father and I will be alone for the best part of the week in this house. Then on Friday I go south to Dumfries till Monday. I must write small, or I shall have a tremendous budget by then.

7.20 *p.m.*—I must tell you a thing I saw to-day. I was going down to Portobello in the train, when there came into the next compartment (third class) an artisan, strongly marked with smallpox, and with sunken, heavy eyes—a face hard and unkind, and without anything lovely. There was a woman on the platform seeing him off. At first sight, with her one eye blind and the whole cast of her features strongly plebeian, and even vicious, she seemed as unpleasant as the man; but there was something beautifully soft, a sort of light of tenderness, as on some Dutch Madonna, that came over her face when she looked at the man. They talked for a while together through the window; the man seemed to have been asking money. "Ye ken the last time," she said, "I gave ye two shillin's for your ludgin', and ye said——" it died off into whisper. Plainly Falstaff and Dame Quickly over again. The man laughed unpleasantly, even

cruelly, and said something; and the woman turned her back on the carriage and stood a long while so, and, do what I might, I could catch no glimpse of her expression, although I thought I saw the heave of a sob in her shoulders. At last, after the train was already in motion, she turned round and put two shillings into his hand. I saw her stand and look after us with a perfect heaven of love on her face—this poor one-eyed Madonna—until the train was out of sight; but the man, sordidly happy with his gains, did not put himself to the inconvenience of one glance to thank her for her ill-deserved kindness.

I have been up at the Spec. and looked out a reference I wanted. The whole town is drowned in white, wet vapour off the sea. Everything drips and soaks. The very statues seem wet to the skin. I cannot pretend to be very cheerful; I did not see one contented face in the streets; and the poor did look so helplessly chill and dripping, without a stitch to change, or so much as a fire to dry themselves at, or perhaps money to buy a meal, or perhaps even a bed. My heart shivers for them.

Dumfries, Friday.—All my thirst for a little warmth, a little sun, a little corner of blue sky avails nothing. Without, the rain falls with a long drawn *swish*, and the night is as dark as a vault. There is no wind indeed, and that is a blessed change after the unruly, bedlamite gusts that have been charging against one round street corners and utterly abolishing and destroying all that is peaceful in life. Nothing sours my temper like these coarse termagant winds. I hate practical joking; and your vulgarest practical joker is your flaw of wind.

I have tried to write some verses; but I find I have nothing to say that has not been already perfectly said and perfectly sung in *Adelaïde*. I have so perfect an idea out of that song! The great Alps, a wonder in the starlight—the river, strong from the hills, and turbulent, and loudly audible at night—the country, a scented *Frühlingsgarten* of orchards and deep wood where the nightingales

harbour—a sort of German flavour over all—and this love-drunken man, wandering on by sleeping village and silent town, pours out of his full heart, *Einst, O Wunder, einst*, etc. I wonder if I am wrong about this being the most beautiful and perfect thing in the world—the only marriage of really accordant words and music—both drunk with the same poignant, unutterable sentiment.

To-day in Glasgow my father went off on some business, and my mother and I wandered about for two hours. We had lunch together, and were very merry over what the people at the restaurant would think of us—mother and son they could not suppose us to be.

Saturday.—And to-day it came—warmth, sunlight, and a strong, hearty living wind among the trees. I found myself a new being. My father and I went off a long walk, through a country most beautifully wooded and various, under a range of hills. You should have seen one place where the wood suddenly fell away in front of us down a long, steep hill between a double row of trees, with one small fair-haired child framed in shadow in the foreground; and when we got to the foot there was the little kirk and kirkyard of Irongray, among broken fields and woods by the side of the bright, rapid river. In the kirkyard there was a wonderful congregation of tombstones, upright and recumbent on four legs (after our Scotch fashion), and of flat-armed fir-trees. One gravestone was erected by Scott (at a cost, I learn, of £70) to the poor woman who served him as heroine in the *Heart of Midlothian*, and the inscription in its stiff, Jedediah Cleishbotham fashion is not without something touching.[1] We went up the stream a little further to where two Covenanters lie buried in an oak-wood; the tombstone (as the custom is) containing the details of their grim little tragedy in funnily bad rhyme, one verse of which sticks in my memory:—

> "We died, their furious rage to stay,
> Near to the kirk of Iron-gray."

[1] See Scott himself, in the preface to the Author's edition.

We then fetched a long compass round about through Holywood Kirk and Lincluden ruins to Dumfries. But the walk came sadly to grief as a pleasure excursion before our return. . . .

Sunday.—Another beautiful day. My father and I walked into Dumfries to church. When the service was done I noted the two halberts laid against the pillar of the churchyard gate; and as I had not seen the little weekly pomp of civic dignitaries in our Scotch country towns for some years, I made my father wait. You should have seen the provost and three bailies going stately away down the sunlit street, and the two town servants strutting in front of them, in red coats and cocked hats, and with the halberts most conspicuously shouldered. We saw Burns's house—a place that made me deeply sad—and spent the afternoon down the banks of the Nith. I had not spent a day by a river since we lunched in the meadows near Sudbury. The air was as pure and clear and sparkling as spring water; beautiful, graceful outlines of hill and wood shut us in on every side; and the swift, brown river fled smoothly away from before our eyes, rippled over with oily eddies and dimples. White gulls had come up from the sea to fish, and hovered and flew hither and thither among the loops of the stream. By good fortune, too, it was a dead calm between my father and me. Do you know, I find these rows harder on me than ever. I get a funny swimming in the head when they come on that I had not before—and the like when I think of them. R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Edinburgh*], *Monday*, 22*nd September* 1873.

I HAVE just had another disagreeable to-night. It is difficult indeed to steer steady among the breakers: I am always touching ground; generally it is my own blame, for I cannot help getting friendly with my father

(whom I *do* love), and so speaking foolishly with my mouth. I have yet to learn in ordinary conversation that reserve and silence that I must try to unlearn in the matter of the feelings.

The news that *Roads* would do reached me in good season; I had begun utterly to despair of doing anything. Certainly I do not think I should be in a hurry to commit myself about the Covenanters; the whole subject turns round about me and so branches out to this side and that, that I grow bewildered; and one cannot write discreetly about any one little corner of an historical period, until one has an organic view of the whole. I have, however—given life and health—great hope of my Covenanters; indeed, there is a lot of precious dust to be beaten out of that stack even by a very infirm hand.

Much later.—I can scarcely see to write just now; so please excuse. We have had an awful scene. All that my father had to say has been put forth—not that it was anything new; only it is the devil to hear. I don't know what to do—the world goes hopelessly round about me; there is no more possibility of doing, living, being anything but a *beast*, and there's the end of it.

It is eleven, I think, for a clock struck. O Lord, there has been a deal of time through our hands since I went down to supper! All this has come from my own folly; I somehow could not think the gulf so impassable, and I read him some notes on the Duke of Argyll [1]—I thought he would agree so far, and that we might have some rational discussion on the rest. And now—after some hours—he has told me that he is a weak man, and that I am driving him too far, and that I know not what I am doing. O dear God, this is bad work!

I have lit a pipe and feel calmer. I say, my dear friend, I am killing my father—he told me to-night (by the way) that I alienated utterly my mother—and this is

[1] *i.e.* on his book, *The Reign of Law.*

the result of my attempt to start fair and fresh and to do my best for all of them.

I must wait till to-morrow ere I finish. I am to-night too excited.

Tuesday.—The sun is shining to-day, which is a great matter, and altogether the gale having blown off again, I live in a precarious lull. On the whole I am not displeased with last night; I kept my eyes open through it all, and, I think, not only avoided saying anything that could make matters worse in the future, but said something that *may* do good. But a little better or a little worse is a trifle. I lay in bed this morning awake, for I was tired and cold and in no special hurry to rise, and heard my father go out for the papers; and then I lay and wished—O, if he would only *whistle* when he comes in again! But of course he did not. I have stopped that pipe.

Now, you see, I have written to you this time and sent it off, for both of which God forgive me.—Ever your faithful friend, R. L. S.

My father and I together can put about a year through in half an hour. Look here, you mustn't take this too much to heart. I shall be all right in a few hours. It's impossible to depress me. And of course, when you can't do anything, there's no need of being depressed. It's all waste tissue. L.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Edinburgh*], *Wednesday, September 24th* 1873.

I HAVE found another "flowering isle." All this beautiful, quiet, sunlit day, I have been out in the country; down by the sea on my favourite coast between Granton and Queensferry. There was a delicate, delicious haze over the firth and sands on one side, and on the other was the shadow of the woods all riven with great

golden rifts of sunshine. A little faint talk of waves upon the beach; the wild strange crying of seagulls over the sea; and the hoarse wood-pigeons and shrill, sweet robins full of their autumn love-making among the trees, made up a delectable concerto of peaceful noises. I spent the whole afternoon among these sights and sounds with Simpson. And we came home from Queensferry on the outside of the coach and four, along a beautiful way full of ups and downs among woody, uneven country, laid out (fifty years ago, I suppose) by my grandfather, on the notion of Hogarth's line of beauty. You see my taste for roads is hereditary.

Friday.—I was wakened this morning by a long flourish of bugles and a roll upon the drums—the *réveillé* at the Castle. I went to the window; it was a grey, quiet dawn, a few people passed already up the street between the gardens, already I heard the noise of an early cab somewhere in the distance, most of the lamps had been extinguished but not all, and there were two or three lit windows in the opposite façade that showed where sick people and watchers had been awake all night and knew not yet of the new, cool day. This appealed to me with a special sadness: how often in the old times my nurse and I had looked across at these, and sympathised!

I wish you would read Michelet's *Louis Quatorze et la Révocation de l'Édit de Nantes.* I read it out in the garden, and the autumnal trees and weather, and my own autumnal humour, and the pitiable prolonged tragedies of Madame and of Molière, as they look, darkling and sombre, out of their niches in the great gingerbread façade of the *Grand Âge*, go wonderfully hand in hand.

I wonder if my revised paper has pleased the Saturday? If it has not, I shall be rather sorry—no, very sorry indeed—but not surprised and certainly not hurt. It will be a great disappointment; but I am glad to say that, among all my queasy, troublesome feelings, I have

not a sensitive vanity. Not that I am not as conceited as you know me to be; only I go easy over the coals in that matter.

I have been out reading Hallam in the garden; and have been talking with my old friend the gardener, a man of singularly hard favour and few teeth. He consulted me this afternoon on the choice of books, premising that his taste ran mainly on war and travel. On travel I had to own at once my ignorance. I suggested Kinglake, but he had read that; and so, finding myself here unhorsed, I turned about and at last recollected Southey's *Lives of the Admirals*, and the volumes of Macaulay containing the wars of William. Can you think of any other for this worthy man? I believe him to hold me in as high an esteem as any one can do; and I reciprocate his respect, for he is quite an intelligent companion.

On Saturday morning I read Morley's article aloud to Bob in one of the walks of the public garden. I was full of it and read most excitedly; and we were ever, as we went to and fro, passing a bench where a man sat reading the Bible aloud to a small circle of the devout. This man is well known to me, sits there all day, sometimes reading, sometimes singing, sometimes distributing tracts. Bob laughed much at the opposition preachers—I never noticed it till he called my attention to the other; but it did not seem to me like opposition—does it to you?—each in his way was teaching what he thought best.

Last night, after reading Walt Whitman a long while for my attempt to write about him, I got *tête-montée*, rushed out up to M. S., came in, took out *Leaves of Grass*, and without giving the poor unbeliever time to object, proceeded to wade into him with favourite passages. I had at least this triumph, that he swore he must read some more of him.—Ever your faithful friend,

LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Sitwell

On the question of the authorship of the *Ode to the Cuckoo*, which Burke thought the most beautiful lyric in our language, the debate was between the claims of John Logan, minister of South Leith (1745–1785), and his friend and fellow-worker Michael Bruce. Those of Logan have, I believe, been now vindicated past doubt.

[*Edinburgh*], *Saturday, October* 4, 1873.

It is a little sharp to-day; but bright and sunny with a sparkle in the air, which is delightful after four days of unintermitting rain. In the streets I saw two men meet after a long separation, it was plain. They came forward with a little run and *leaped* at each other's hands. You never saw such bright eyes as they both had. It put one in a good humour to see it.

8 *p.m.*—I made a little more out of my work than I have made for a long while back; though even now I cannot make things fall into sentences—they only sprawl over the paper in bald orphan clauses. Then I was about in the afternoon with Baxter; and we had a good deal of fun, first rhyming on the names of all the shops we passed, and afterwards buying needles and quack drugs from open-air vendors, and taking much pleasure in their inexhaustible eloquence. Every now and then as we went, Arthur's Seat showed its head at the end of a street, Now, to-day the blue sky and the sunshine were both entirely wintry; and there was about the hill, in these glimpses, a sort of thin, unreal, crystalline distinctness that I have not often seen excelled. As the sun began to go down over the valley between the new town and the old, the evening grew resplendent; all the gardens and low-lying buildings sank back and became almost invisible in a mist of wonderful sun, and the Castle stood up against the sky, as thin and sharp in outline as a castle cut out of paper. Baxter made a good remark about Princes Street, that it was the most elastic street for length that he knew; sometimes it looks, as it looked

to-night, interminable, a way leading right into the heart of the red sundown; sometimes, again, it shrinks together, as if for warmth, on one of the withering, clear east-windy days, until it seems to lie underneath your feet.

I want to let you see these verses from an *Ode to the Cuckoo* written by one of the ministers of Leith in the middle of last century—the palmy days of Edinburgh—who was a friend of Hume and Adam Smith and the whole constellation. The authorship of these beautiful verses has been most truculently fought about; but whoever wrote them (and it seems as if this Logan had) they are lovely—

"What time the pea puts on the bloom,
Thou fliest the vocal vale,
An annual guest, in other lands
Another spring to hail.

Sweet bird! thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year.

O could I fly, I'd fly with thee!
We'd make on joyful wing
Our annual visit o'er the globe,
Companions of the spring."

Sunday.—I have been at church with my mother, where we heard "Arise, shine," sung excellently well, and my mother was so much upset with it that she nearly had to leave church. This was the antidote, however, to fifty minutes of solid sermon, varra heavy. I have been sticking in to Walt Whitman; nor do I think I have ever laboured so hard to attain so small a success. Still, the thing is taking shape, I think; I know a little better what I want to say all through; and in process of time, possibly I shall manage to say it. I must say I am a very bad workman, *mais j'ai du courage:* I am indefatigable at

rewriting and bettering, and surely that humble quality should get me on a little.

Monday, October 6.—It is a magnificent glimmering moonlight night, with a wild, great west wind abroad, flapping above one like an immense banner, and every now and again swooping furiously against my windows. The wind is too strong perhaps, and the trees are certainly too leafless for much of that wide rustle that we both remember; there is only a sharp, angry, sibilant hiss, like breath drawn with the strength of the elements through shut teeth, that one hears between the gusts only. I am in excellent humour with myself, for I have worked hard and not altogether fruitlessly; and I wished before I turned in just to tell you that things were so. My dear friend, I feel so happy when I think that you remember me kindly. I have been up to-night lecturing to a friend on life and duties and what a man could do; a coal off the altar had been laid on my lips, and I talked quite above my average, and hope I spread, what you would wish to see spread, into one person's heart; and with a new light upon it.

I shall tell you a story. Last Friday I went down to Portobello, in the heavy rain, with an uneasy wind blowing *par rafales* off the sea (or "*en rafales*" should it be? or what?). As I got down near the beach a poor woman, oldish, and seemingly, lately at least, respectable, followed me and made signs. She was drenched to the skin, and looked wretched below wretchedness. You know, I did not like to look back at her; it seemed as if she might misunderstand and be terribly hurt and slighted; so I stood at the end of the street—there was no one else within sight in the wet—and lifted up my hand very high with some money in it. I heard her steps draw heavily near behind me, and, when she was near enough to see, I let the money fall in the mud and went off at my best walk without ever turning round. There is nothing in the story; and yet you will understand how much

there is, if one chose to set it forth. You see, she was so ugly; and you know there is something terribly, miserably pathetic in a certain smile, a certain sodden aspect of invitation on such faces. It is so terrible, that it is in a way sacred; it means the outside of degradation and (what is worst of all in life) false position. I hope you understand me rightly.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

[*Edinburgh*], *Tuesday, October* 14, 1873.

MY father has returned in better health, and I am more delighted than I can well tell you. The one trouble that I can see no way through is that his health, or my mother's, should give way. To-night, as I was walking along Princes Street, I heard the bugles sound the recall. I do not think I had ever remarked it before; there is something of unspeakable appeal in the cadence. I felt as if something yearningly cried to me out of the darkness overhead to come thither and find rest; one felt as if there must be warm hearts and bright fires waiting for one up there, where the buglers stood on the damp pavement and sounded their friendly invitation forth into the night.

Wednesday.—I may as well tell you exactly about my health. I am not at all ill; have quite recovered; only I am what *MM. les médecins* call below par; which, in plain English, is that I am weak. With tonics, decent weather, and a little cheerfulness, that will go away in its turn, and I shall be all right again.

I am glad to hear what you say about the Exam.; until quite lately I have treated that pretty cavalierly, for I say honestly that I do not mind being plucked; I shall just have to go up again. We travelled with the Lord Advocate the other day, and he strongly advised me in

my father's hearing to go to the English Bar; and the Lord Advocate's advice goes a long way in Scotland. It is a sort of special legal revelation. Don't misunderstand me. I don't, of course, want to be plucked; but so far as my style of knowledge suits them, I cannot make much betterment on it in a month. If they wish scholarship more exact, I must take a new lease altogether.

Thursday.—My head and eyes both gave in this morning, and I had to take a day of complete idleness. I was in the open air all day, and did no thought that I could avoid, and I think I have got my head between my shoulders again; however, I am not going to do much. I don't want you to run away with any fancy about my being ill. Given a person weak and in some trouble, and working longer hours than he is used to, and you have the matter in a nutshell. You should have seen the sunshine on the hill to-day; it has lost now that crystalline clearness, as if the medium were spring-water (you see, I am stupid!); but it retains that wonderful thinness of outline that makes the delicate shape and hue savour better in one's mouth, like fine wine out of a finely-blown glass. The birds are all silent now but the crows. I sat a long time on the stairs that lead down to Duddingston Loch—a place as busy as a great town during frost, but now solitary and silent; and when I shut my eyes I heard nothing but the wind in the trees; and you know all that went through me, I dare say, without my saying it.

11.—I am now all right. I do not expect any tic to-night, and shall be at work again to-morrow. I have had a day of open air, only a little modified by *Le Capitaine Fracasse* before the dining-room fire. I must write no more, for I am sleepy after two nights, to quote my book, "*sinon blanches, du moins grises*"; and so I must go to bed and faithfully, hoggishly slumber.—Your faithful

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

On the advice of the Lord Advocate it had been agreed that Stevenson should present himself for admission as a student at one of the London Inns of Court and should come to town after the middle of October to be examined for that purpose. The following two letters refer to this purpose and to the formalities required for effecting it :—

[*Edinburgh, Oct.* 15, 1873], *Wednesday.*

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Of course I knew as well as you that I was merely running before an illness ; but I thought I should be in time to escape. However I was knocked over on Monday night with a bad sore throat, fever, rheumatism, and a threatening of pleurisy, which last is, I think, gone. I still hope to be able to get away early next week, though I am not very clear as to how I shall manage the journey. If I don't get away on Wednesday at latest, I lose my excuse for going at all, and I do wish to escape a little while.

I shall see about the form when I get home, which I hope will be to-morrow (I was taken ill in a friend's house and have not yet been moved).

How could a broken-down engineer expect to make anything of *Roads.* Requiescant. When we get well (and if we get well), we shall do something better.—
Yours sincerely, R. L. STEVENSON.

Ye couche of pain.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Edinburgh, October* 16, 1873], *Thursday.*

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I am at my wits' end about this abominable form of admission. I don't know what the devil it is ; I haven't got one even if I did, and so can't sign.

Monday night is the very earliest on which (even if I go on mending at the very great pace I have made

already) I can hope to be in London myself. But possibly it is only intimation that requires to be made on Tuesday morning; and one may possess oneself of a form of admission up to the eleventh hour. I send herewith a letter which I must ask you to cherish, as I count it a sort of talisman. Perhaps you may understand it, I don't.

If you don't understand it, please do not trouble and we must just hope that Tuesday morning will be early enough to do all. Of course I fear the exam. will spin me; indeed after this bodily and spiritual crisis I should not dream of coming up at all; only that I require it as a pretext for a moment's escape, which I want much.

I am so glad that *Roads* has got in. I had almost as soon have it in the Portfolio as the Saturday; the P. is so nicely printed and I am *gourmet* in type. I don't know how to thank you for your continual kindness to me; and I am afraid I do not even feel grateful enough —you have let your kindnesses come on me so easily.—
Yours sincerely, LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

When Stevenson a few days later came to London, it was before the physicians and not the lawyers that he must present himself; and the result of an examination by Sir Andrew Clark was his prompt and peremptory despatch to Mentone for a winter's rest and sunshine at a distance from all causes of mental agitation. This episode of his life gave occasion to the essay *Ordered South*, the only one of his writings in which he took the invalid point of view or allowed his health troubles in any degree to colour his work. Travelling south by slow stages, he wrote on the way a long diary-letter from which extracts follow:—

Avignon [*November* 1873].

I HAVE just read your letter upon the top of the hill beside the church and castle. The whole air was filled with sunset and the sound of bells; and I wish I could

give you the least notion of the *southernness* and *Provençality* of all that I saw.

I cannot write while I am travelling; *c'est un défaut;* but so it is. I must have a certain feeling of being at home, and my head must have time to settle. The new images oppress me, and I have a fever of restlessness on me. You must not be disappointed at such shabby letters; and besides, remember my poor head and the fanciful crawling in the spine.

I am back again in the stage of thinking there is nothing the matter with me, which is a good sign; but I am wretchedly nervous. Anything like rudeness I am simply babyishly afraid of; and noises, and especially the sounds of certain voices, are the devil to me. A blind poet whom I found selling his immortal works in the streets of Sens, captivated me with the remarkable equable strength and sweetness of his voice; and I listened a long while and bought some of the poems; and now this voice, after I had thus got it thoroughly into my head, proved false metal and a really bad and horrible voice at bottom. It haunted me some time, but I think I am done with it now.

I hope you don't dislike reading bad style like this as much as I do writing it: it hurts me when neither words nor clauses fall into their places, much as it would hurt you to sing when you had a bad cold and your voice deceived you and missed every other note. I do feel so inclined to break the pen and write no more; and here *àpropos* begins my back.

After dinner.—It blows to-night from the north down the valley of the Rhone, and everything is so cold that I have been obliged to indulge in a fire. There is a fine crackle and roar of burning wood in the chimney which is very homely and companionable, though it does seem to postulate a town all white with snow outside.

I have bought Sainte-Beuve's Chateaubriand and am

immensely delighted with the critic. Chateaubriand is more antipathetic to me than anyone else in the world.

I begin to wish myself arrived to-night. Travelling, when one is not quite well, has a good deal of unpleasantness. One is easily upset by cross incidents, and wants that *belle humeur* and spirit of adventure that makes a pleasure out of what is unpleasant.

Tuesday, November 11th.—There! There's a date for you. I shall be in Mentone for my birthday, with plenty of nice letters to read. I went away across the Rhone and up the hill on the other side that I might see the town from a distance. Avignon followed me with its bells and drums and bugles; for the old city has no equal for multitude of such noises. Crossing the bridge and seeing the brown turbid water foam and eddy about the piers, one could scarce believe one's eyes when one looked down upon the stream and saw the smooth blue mirroring tree and hill. Over on the other side, the sun beat down so furiously on the white road that I was glad to keep in the shadow and, when the occasion offered, to turn aside among the olive-yards. It was nine years and six months since I had been in an olive-yard. I found myself much changed, not so gay, but wiser and more happy. I read your letter again, and sat awhile looking down over the tawny plain and at the fantastic outline of the city. The hills seemed just fainting into the sky; even the great peak above Carpentras (Lord knows how many metres above the sea) seemed unsubstantial and thin in the breadth and potency of the sunshine.

I should like to stay longer here but I can't. I am driven forward by restlessness, and leave this afternoon about two. I am just going out now to visit again the church, castle, and hill, for the sake of the magnificent panorama, and besides, because it is the friendliest spot in all Avignon to me.

Later.—You cannot picture to yourself anything more steeped in hard bright sunshine than the view from the hill. The immovable inky shadow of the old bridge on the fleeting surface of the yellow river seemed more solid than the bridge itself. Just in the place where I sat yesterday evening a shaven man in a velvet cap was studying music—evidently one of the singers for *La Muette de Portici* at the theatre to-night. I turned back as I went away: the white Christ stood out in strong relief on his brown cross against the blue sky, and the four kneeling angels and lanterns grouped themselves about the foot with a symmetry that was almost laughable; the musician read on at his music, and counted time with his hand on the stone step.

Menton, November 12th.—My first enthusiasm was on rising at Orange and throwing open the shutters. Such a great living flood of sunshine poured in upon me, that I confess to having danced and expressed my satisfaction aloud; in the middle of which the boots came to the door with hot water, to my great confusion.

To-day has been one long delight, coming to a magnificent climax on my arrival here. I gave up my baggage to an hotel porter and set off to walk at once. I was somewhat confused as yet as to my directions, for the station of course was new to me, and the hills had not sufficiently opened out to let me recognise the peaks. Suddenly, as I was going forward slowly in this confusion of mind, I was met by a great volley of odours out of the lemon and orange gardens, and the past linked on to the present, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the whole scene fell before me into order, and I was at home. I nearly danced again.

I suppose I must send off this to-night to notify my arrival in safety and good-humour and, I think, in good health, before relapsing into the old weekly vein. I hope this time to send you a weekly dose of sunshine from the

south, instead of the jet of *snell* Edinburgh east wind that used to was.—Ever your faithful friend, R. L. S.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

Hôtel du Pavillon, Menton,
November 13, 1873.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—The *Place* is not where I thought; it is about where the old Post Office was. The Hôtel de Londres is no more an hotel. I have found a charming room in the Hôtel du Pavillon, just across the road from the Prince's Villa; it has one window to the south and one to the east, with a superb view of Mentone and the hills, to which I move this afternoon. In the old great *Place* there is a kiosque for the sale of newspapers; a string of omnibuses (perhaps thirty) go up and down under the plane-trees of the Turin Road on the occasion of each train; the Promenade has crossed both streams, and bids fair to reach the Cap Martin. The old chapel near Freeman's house at the entrance to the Gorbio valley is now entirely submerged under a shining new villa, with pavilion annexed; over which, in all the pride of oak and chestnut and divers coloured marbles, I was shown this morning by the obliging proprietor. The Prince's Palace itself is rehabilitated, and shines afar with white window-curtains from the midst of a garden, all trim borders and greenhouses and carefully kept walks. On the other side, the villas are more thronged together, and they have arranged themselves, shelf after shelf, behind each other. I see the glimmer of new buildings, too, as far eastward as Grimaldi; and a viaduct carries (I suppose) the railway past the mouth of the bone caves. F. Bacon (Lord Chancellor) made the remark that "Time was the greatest innovator"; it is perhaps as meaningless a remark as was ever made; but as Bacon made it, I suppose it is better than any that I could make. Does it not seem as if things were

fluid? They are displaced and altered in ten years so that one has difficulty, even with a memory so very vivid and retentive for that sort of thing as mine, in identifying places where one lived a long while in the past, and which one has kept piously in mind during all the interval. Nevertheless, the hills, I am glad to say, are unaltered; though I dare say the torrents have given them many a shrewd scar, and the rains and thaws dislodged many a boulder from their heights, if one were only keen enough to perceive it. The sea makes the same noise in the shingle; and the lemon and orange gardens still discharge in the still air their fresh perfume; and the people have still brown comely faces; and the Pharmacie Gros still dispenses English medicines; and the invalids (eheu!) still sit on the promenade and trifle with their fingers in the fringes of shawls and wrappers; and the shop of Pascal Amarante still, in its present bright consummate flower of aggrandisement and new paint, offers everything that it has entered into people's hearts to wish for in the idleness of a sanatorium; and the "Château des Morts" is still at the top of the town; and the fort and the jetty are still at the foot, only there are now two jetties; and—I am out of breath. (To be continued in our next.)

For myself, I have come famously through the journey; and as I have written this letter (for the first time for ever so long) with ease and even pleasure, I think my head must be better. I am still no good at coming down hills or stairs; and my feet are more consistently cold than is quite comfortable. But, these apart, I feel well; and in good spirits all round.

I have written to Nice for letters, and hope to get them to-night. Continue to address Poste Restante. Take care of yourselves.

This is my birthday, by the way—O, I said that before. Adieu.—Ever your affectionate son,

R. L. Stevenson.

To Mrs. Sitwell,

Menton, November 13, 1873.

I MUST pour out my disgust at the absence of a letter; my birthday nearly gone, and devil a letter—I beg pardon. After all, now I think of it, it is only a week since I left.

I have here the nicest room in Mentone. Let me explain. Ah! there's the bell for the *table d'hôte*. Now to see if there is anyone conversable within these walls.

In the interval my letters have come; none from you, but one from Bob, which both pained and pleased me. He cannot get on without me at all, he writes; he finds that I have been the whole world for him; that he only talked to other people in order that he might tell me afterwards about the conversation. Should I—I really don't know quite what to feel; I am so much astonished, and almost more astonished that he should have expressed it than that he should feel it; he never would have *said* it, I know. I feel a strange sense of weight and responsibility.—Ever your faithful friend, R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

In the latter part of this letter will be found the germ of the essay *Ordered South*.

Menton, Sunday [*November* 23, 1873].

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I sat a long while up among the olive yards to-day at a favourite corner, where one has a fair view down the valley and on to the blue floor of the sea. I had a Horace with me, and read a little; but Horace, when you try to read him fairly under the open heaven, sounds urban, and you find something of the escaped townsman in his descriptions of the country, just as somebody said that Morris's sea-pieces were all taken

from the coast. I tried for long to hit upon some language that might catch ever so faintly the indefinable shifting colour of olive leaves; and, above all, the changes and little silverings that pass over them, like blushes over a face, when the wind tosses great branches to and fro; but the Muse was not favourable. A few birds scattered here and there at wide intervals on either side of the valley sang the little broken songs of late autumn; and there was a great stir of insect life in the grass at my feet. The path up to this coign of vantage, where I think I shall make it a habit to ensconce myself a while of a morning, is for a little while common to the peasant and a little clear brooklet. It is pleasant, in the tempered grey daylight of the olive shadows, to see the people picking their way among the stones and the water and the brambles; the women especially, with the weights poised on their heads and walking all from the hips with a certain graceful deliberation.

Tuesday.—I have been to Nice to-day to see Dr. Bennet; he agrees with Clark that there is no disease; but I finished up my day with a lamentable exhibition of weakness. I could not remember French, or at least I was afraid to go into any place lest I should not be able to remember it, and so could not tell when the train went. At last I crawled up to the station and sat down on the steps, and just steeped myself there in the sunshine until the evening began to fall and the air to grow chilly. This long rest put me all right; and I came home here triumphantly and ate dinner well. There is the full, true, and particular account of the worst day I have had since I left London. I shall not go to Nice again for some time to come.

Thursday.—I am to-day quite recovered, and got into Mentone to-day for a book, which is quite a creditable walk. As an intellectual being I have not yet begun to re-exist; my immortal soul is still very nearly extinct; but we must hope the best. Now, do take warning by

me. I am set up by a beneficent providence at the corner of the road, to warn you to flee from the hebetude that is to follow. Being sent to the South is not much good unless you take your soul with you, you see; and my soul is rarely with me here. I don't see much beauty. I have lost the key; I can only be placid and inert, and see the bright days go past uselessly one after another; therefore don't talk foolishly with your mouth any more about getting liberty by being ill and going south *viâ* the sickbed. It is not the old free-born bird that gets thus to freedom; but I know not what manacled and hide-bound spirit, incapable of pleasure, the clay of a man. Go south! Why, I saw more beauty with my eyes healthfully alert to see in two wet windy February afternoons in Scotland than I can see in my beautiful olive gardens and grey hills in a whole week in my low and lost estate, as the Shorter Catechism puts it somewhere. It is a pitiable blindness, this blindness of the soul; I hope it may not be long with me. So remember to keep well; and remember rather anything than not to keep well; and again I say, *anything* rather than not to keep well.

Not that I am unhappy, mind you. I have found the words already—placid and inert, that is what I am. I sit in the sun and enjoy the tingle all over me, and I am cheerfully ready to concur with any one who says that this is a beautiful place, and I have a sneaking partiality for the newspapers, which would be all very well, if one had not fallen from heaven and were not troubled with some reminiscence of the *ineffable aurore*.

To sit by the sea and to be conscious of nothing but the sound of the waves, and the sunshine over all your body, is not unpleasant; but I was an Archangel once.

Friday.—If you knew how old I felt! I am sure this is what age brings with it—this carelessness, this disenchantment, this continual bodily weariness. I am a

man of seventy: O Medea, kill me, or make me young again! [1]

To-day has been cloudy and mild; and I have lain a great while on a bench outside the garden wall (my usual place now) and looked at the dove-coloured sea and the broken roof of cloud, but there was no seeing in my eye. Let us hope to-morrow will be more profitable.

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

The history of the scruples and ideas of duty in regard to money expressed in the following letter is set forth and further explained in retrospect in the fragment called *Lay Morals*, written in 1879. The Walt Whitman essay here mentioned is not that afterwards printed in *Men and Books*, but an earlier and more enthusiastic version. Mr. Dowson (of whom Stevenson lost sight after these Riviera days) was the father of the unfortunate poet Ernest Dowson. His acquaintance was the first result of Stevenson's search for "anyone conversable" in the hotel.

Menton, Sunday [*November* 30, 1873].

MY DEAR FRIEND,—To-day is as hot as it has been in the sun; and as I was a little tired and seedy, I went down and just drank in sunshine. A strong wind has risen out of the west; the great big dead leaves from the roadside planes scuttled about and chased one another over the gravel round me with a noise like little waves under the keel of a boat, and jumped up sometimes on to my lap and into my face. I lay down on my back at last, and looked up into the sky. The white corner of the hotel, with a wide projection at the top, stood out in dazzling relief; and there was nothing else, save a few of the plane leaves that had got up wonderfully high and turned and eddied and flew here and there like little pieces of gold leaf, to break the extraordinary sea of blue. It was bluer than anything in the world here; wonderfully

[1] Compare the paragraph in *Ordered South* describing the state of mind of the invalid doubtful of recovery, and ending: "He will pray for Medea; when she comes, let her either rejuvenate or slay."

blue, and looking deeply peaceful, although in truth there was a high wind blowing.

I am concerned about the plane leaves. Hitherto it has always been a great feature to see these trees standing up head and shoulders and chest—head and body, in fact—above the wonderful blue-grey-greens of the olives, in one glory of red gold. Much more of this wind, and the gold, I fear, will be all spent.

9.20.—I must write you another little word. I have found here a new friend, to whom I grow daily more devoted—George Sand. I go on from one novel to another and think the last I have read the most sympathetic and friendly in tone, until I have read another. It is a life in dreamland. Have you read *Mademoiselle Merquem?*

Monday.—I did not quite know last night what to say to you about *Mlle. Merquem.* If you want to be unpleasantly moved, read it.

I am gloomy and out of spirits to-night in consequence of a ridiculous scene at the *table d'hôte,* where a parson whom I rather liked took offence at something I said and we had almost a quarrel. It was mopped up and stifled, like spilt wine with a napkin; but it leaves an unpleasant impression.

I have again ceased all work, because I felt that it strained my head a little, and so I have resumed the tedious task of waiting with folded hands for better days. But thanks to George Sand and the sunshine, I am very jolly.

That last word was so much out of key that I could sit no longer, and went away to seek out my clergyman and apologise to him. He was gone to bed. I don't know what makes me take this so much to heart. I suppose it's nerves or pride or something; but I am unhappy about it. I am going to drown my sorrows in *Consuelo* and burn some incense in my pipe to the god of Contentment and Forgetfulness.

I do not know, but I hope, if I can only get better, I shall be a help to you soon in every way and no more a trouble and burthen. All my difficulties about life have so cleared away; the scales have fallen from my eyes, and the broad road of my duty lies out straight before me without cross or hindrance. I have given up all hope, all fancy rather, of making literature my hold: I see that I have not capacity enough. My life shall be, if I can make it, my only business. I am desirous to practise now, rather than to preach, for I know that I should ever preach badly, and men can more easily forgive faulty practice than dull sermons. If Colvin does not think that I shall be able to support myself soon by literature, I shall give it up and go (horrible as the thought is to me) into an office of some sort: the first and main question is, that I must live by my own hands; after that come the others.

You will not regard me as a madman, I am sure. It is a very rational aberration at least to try to put your beliefs into practice. Strangely enough, it has taken me a long time to see this distinctly with regard to my whole creed; but I have seen it at last, praised be my sickness and my leisure! I have seen it at last; the sun of my duty has risen; I have enlisted for the first time, and after long coquetting with the shilling, under the banner of the Holy Ghost![1]

8.15.—If you had seen the moon last night! It was like transfigured sunshine; as clear and mellow, only showing everything in a new wonderful significance. The shadows of the leaves on the road were so strangely black that Dowson and I had difficulty in believing that they were not solid, or at least pools of dark mire. And the hills and the trees, and the white Italian houses with lit windows! O! nothing could bring home to you the keenness and the reality and the wonderful *Unheimlichkeit* of all these. When the moon rises every night

[1] Alluding to Heine's *Ritter von dem heiligen Geist.*

over the Italian coast, it makes a long path over the sea as yellow as gold.

How I happened to be out in the moonlight yesterday, was that Dowson and I spent the evening with an odd man called Bates, who played Italian music to us with great feeling; all which was quite a dissipation in my still existence.

Friday.—I cannot endure to be dependent much longer, it stops my mouth. Something I must find shortly. I mean when I am able for anything. However I am much better already; and have been writing not altogether my worst although not very well. Walt Whitman is stopped. I have bemired it so atrociously by working at it when I was out of humour that I must let the colour dry; and alas! what I have been doing in its place doesn't seem to promise any money. However it is all practice and it interests myself extremely. I have now received £80, some £55 of which still remain; all this is more debt to civilisation and my fellowmen. When shall I be able to pay it back? You do not know how much this money question begins to take more and more importance in my eyes every day. It is an old phrase of mine that money is the *atmosphere* of civilised life, and I do hate to take the breath out of other people's nostrils. I live here at the rate of more than £3 a week and I do nothing for it. If I didn't hope to get well and do good work yet and more than repay my debts to the world, I should consider it right to invest an extra franc or two in laudanum. But I *will* repay it.—Always your faithful friend, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To CHARLES BAXTER

[*Menton, December*, 1873.]

MY DEAR BAXTER,—At last, I must write. I must say straight out that I am not recovering as I could wish. I am no stronger than I was when I came here, and I

pay for every walk, beyond say a quarter of a mile in length, by one or two, or even three, days of more or less prostration. Therefore let nobody be down upon me for not writing. I was very thankful to you for answering my letter; and for the princely action of Simpson in writing to me, I mean before I had written to him, I was ditto to an almost higher degree. I hope one or another of you will write again soon; and, remember, I still live in hope of reading Grahame Murray's address.

I have not made a joke, upon my living soul, since I left London. O! except one, a very small one, that I had made before, and that I very timidly repeated in a half-exhilarated state towards the close of dinner, like one of those dead-alive flies that we see pretending to be quite light and full of the frivolity of youth in the first sunshiny days. It was about mothers' meetings, and it was damned small, and it was my ewe lamb—the Lord knows I couldn't have made another to save my life—and a clergyman quarrelled with me, and there was as nearly an explosion as could be. This has not fostered my leaning towards pleasantry. I felt that it was a very cold, hard world that night.

My dear Charles, is the sky blue at Mentone? Was that your question? Well, it depends upon what you call blue; it's a question of taste, I suppose. Is the sky blue? You poor critter, you never saw blue sky worth being called blue in the same day with it. And I should rather fancy that the sun did shine I should. And the moon doesn't shine either. O no! (This last is sarcastic.) Mentone is one of the most beautiful places in the world, and has always had a very warm corner in my heart since first I knew it eleven years ago.

11*th December.*—I live in the same hotel with Lord X. He has black whiskers, and has been successful in raising some kids; rather a melancholy success; they are weedy looking kids in Highland clo'. They have a tutor with

them who respires Piety and that kind of humble your-lordship's-most-obedient sort of gentlemanliness that noblemen's tutors have generally. They all get livings, these men, and silvery hair and a gold watch from their attached pupil; and they sit in the porch and make the watch repeat for their little grandchildren, and tell them long stories, beginning, "When I was private tutor in the family of," etc., and the grandchildren cock snooks at them behind their backs and go away whenever they can to get the groom to teach them bad words.

Sidney Colvin will arrive here on Saturday or Sunday; so I shall have someone to jaw with. And, seriously, this is a great want. I have not been all these weeks in idleness, as you may fancy, without much thinking as to my future; and I have a great deal in view that may or may not be possible (that I do not yet know), but that is at least an object and a hope before me. I cannot help recurring to seriousness a moment before I stop; for I must say that living here a good deal alone, and having had ample time to look back upon my past, I have become very serious all over. If I can only get back my health, by God! I shall not be as useless as I have been.—Ever yours, *mon vieux*,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

[*Menton, December*, 1873], *Sunday.*

THE first violet. There is more sweet trouble for the heart in the breath of this small flower than in all the wines of all the vineyards of Europe. I cannot contain myself. I do not think so small a thing has ever given me such a princely festival of pleasure. I feel as if my heart were a little bunch of violets in my bosom; and my brain is pleasantly intoxicated with the wonderful odour. I suppose I am writing nonsense, but it does not seem nonsense to me. Is it not a wonderful odour?

is it not something incredibly subtle and perishable? It is like a wind blowing to one out of fairyland. No one need tell me that the phrase is exaggerated if I say that this violet *sings;* it sings with the same voice as the March blackbird; and the same adorable tremor goes through one's soul at the hearing of it.

Monday.—All yesterday I was under the influence of opium. I had been rather seedy during the night and took a dose in the morning, and for the first time in my life it took effect upon me. I had a day of extraordinary happiness; and when I went to bed there was something almost terrifying in the pleasures that besieged me in the darkness. Wonderful tremors filled me; my head swam in the most delirious but enjoyable manner; and the bed softly oscillated with me, like a boat in a very gentle ripple. It does not make me write a good style apparently, which is just as well, lest I should be tempted to renew the experiment; and some verses which I wrote turn out on inspection to be not quite equal to *Kubla Khan.* However, I was happy, and the recollection is not troubled by any reaction this morning.

Wednesday.—Do you know, I think I am much better. I really enjoy things, and I really feel dull occasionally, neither of which was possible with me before; and though I am still tired and weak, I almost think I feel a stirring among the dry bones. O, I should like to recover, and be once more well and happy and fit for work! And then to be able to begin really to my life; to have done, for the rest of time, with preluding and doubting; and to take hold of the pillars strongly with Samson—to burn my ships with (whoever did it). O, I begin to feel my spirits come back to me again at the thought!

Thursday.—I sat along the beach this morning under some reeds (or canes—I know not which they are): everything was so tropical; nothing visible but the glaring white shingle, the blue sea, the blue sky, and the green plumes of the canes thrown out against the latter some

ten or fifteen feet above my head. The noise of the surf alone broke the quiet. I had somehow got *Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh* into my head; and I was happy for I do not know how long, sitting there and repeating to myself these lines. It is wonderful how things somehow fall into a full satisfying harmony, and out of the fewest elements there is established a sort of small perfection. It was so this morning. I did not want anything further.

To Mrs. Sitwell

In the third week of December I went out to join my friend for a part of the Christmas vacation, and found him without tangible disease, but very weak and ailing: ill-health and anxiety, however, neither then nor at any time diminished his charm as a companion. He left Mentone to meet me at the old town of Monaco, where we spent a few days and from whence these stray notes of nature and human nature were written.

Monaco, Tuesday [*December* 1873]

We have been out all day in a boat; lovely weather and almost dead calm, only the most infinitesimal and indeterminate of oscillations moved us hither and thither; the sails were duly set, and flapped about idly overhead. Our boatman was a man of a delightful humour, who told us many tales of the sea, notably one of a doctor, who was an Englishman, and who seemed almost an epitome of vices—drunken, dishonest, and utterly without faith; and yet he was a *charmant garçon*. He told us many amusing circumstances of the doctor's incompetence and dishonesty, and imitated his accent with a singular success. I couldn't quite see that he was a charming *garçon*—"*O, oui—comme caractère, un charmant garçon.*" We landed on that Cap Martin, the place of firs and rocks and myrtle and rosemary of which I spoke to you. As we pulled along in the fresh shadow, the wonderfully clean scents blew out upon us, as if from islands of spice—only how much better than cloves and cinnamon!

Friday.—Colvin and I are sitting on a seat on the

battlemented gardens of Old Monaco. The day is grey and clouded, with a little red light on the horizon, and the sea, hundreds of feet below us, is a sort of purple dove-colour. Shrub-geraniums, firs, and aloes cover all available shelves and terraces, and where these become impossible, the prickly pear precipitates headlong downwards its bunches of oval plates; so that the whole face of the cliff is covered with an arrested fall (please excuse clumsy language), a sort of fall of the evil angels petrified midway on its career. White gulls sail past below us every now and then, sometimes singly, sometimes by twos and threes, and sometimes in a great flight. The sharp perfume of the shrub-geraniums fills the air.

I cannot write, in any sense of the word; but I am as happy as can be, and wish to notify the fact, before it passes. The sea is blue, grey, purple and green; very subdued and peaceful; earlier in the day it was marbled by small keen specks of sun and larger spaces of faint irradiation; but the clouds have closed together now, and these appearances are no more. Voices of children and occasional crying of gulls; the mechanical noise of a gardener somewhere behind us in the scented thicket; and the faint report and rustle of the waves on the precipice far below, only break in upon the quietness to render it more complete and perfect.

Robert Louis Stevenson.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

After spending a few days in one of the more retired hotels of Monte Carlo, we went on to Mentone and settled at the Hotel Mirabeau, long since, I believe, defunct, near the eastern extremity of the town. The little American girl mentioned in the last paragraph is the same we shall meet later under her full name of Marie Johnstone.

[*Hotel Mirabeau, Menton*], *January 2nd*, 1874.

Here I am over in the east bay of Mentone, where I am not altogether sorry to find myself. I move so little

that I soon exhaust the immediate neighbourhood of my dwelling places. Our reason for coming here was however very simple. Hobson's choice. Mentone during my absence has filled marvellously.

Continue to address P. R.[1] Menton; and try to conceive it as possible that I am not a drivelling idiot. When I wish an address changed, it is quite on the cards that I shall be able to find language explicit enough to express the desire. My whole desire is to avoid complication of addresses. It is quite fatal. If two P. R.'s have contradictory orders they will continue to play battledoor and shuttlecock with an unhappy epistle, which will never get farther afield but perish there miserably.

You act too much on the principle that whatever I do is done unwisely; and that whatever I do not, has been culpably forgotten. This is wounding to my nat'ral vanity.

I have not written for three days I think; but what days! They were very cold; and I must say I was able thoroughly to appreciate the blessings of Mentone. Old Smoko this winter would evidently have been very summary with me. I could not stand the cold at all. I exhausted all my own and all Colvin's clothing; I then retired to the house, and then to bed; in a condition of sorrow for myself unequalled. The sun is forth again (laus Deo) and the wind is milder, and I am greatly reestablished. A certain asperity of temper still lingers, however, which Colvin supports with much mildness.

In this hotel, I have a room on the first floor! Luxury, however, is not altogether regardless of expense. We only pay 13 francs per day—3½ more than at the Pavillon on the third floor.—And beggars must not be choosers. We were very nearly houseless, the night we came. And it is rarely that such winds of adversity blow men into king's Palaces.

Looking over what has gone before, it seems to me

[1] *Poste Restante*

that it is not strictly polite. I beg to withdraw all that is offensive.

At *table d'hôte*, we have some people who amuse us much; two Americans, who would try to pass for French people, and their daughter, the most charming of little girls. Both Colvin and I have planned an abduction already. The whole hotel is devoted to her; and the waiters continually do smuggle out comfits and fruit and pudding to her.

All well.—Ever your affectionate son,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

The M'Laren herein mentioned was of course the distinguished Scotch politician and social reformer, Duncan M'Laren, for sixteen years M.P. for Edinburgh.

[*Menton*], *Sunday, January* 4, 1874.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—We have here fallen on the very pink of hotels. I do not say that it is more pleasantly conducted than the Pavillon, for that were impossible; but the rooms are so cheery and bright and new, and then the food! I never, I think, so fully appreciated the phrase "the fat of the land" as I have done since I have been here installed. There was a dish of eggs at *déjeûner* the other day, over the memory of which I lick my lips in the silent watches.

Now that the cold has gone again, I continue to keep well in body, and already I begin to walk a little more. My head is still a very feeble implement, and easily set a-spinning; and I can do nothing in the way of work beyond reading books that may, I hope, be of some use to me afterwards.

I was very glad to see that M'Laren was sat upon, and principally for the reason why. Deploring as I do much of the action of the Trades Unions, these conspiracy clauses and the whole partiality of the Master and Servant

Act are a disgrace to our equal laws. Equal laws become a byeword when what is legal for one class becomes a criminal offence for another. It did my heart good to hear that man tell M'Laren how, as he had talked much of getting the franchise for working men, he must now be content to see them use it now they had got it. This is a smooth stone well planted in the foreheads of certain dilettanti radicals, after M'Laren's fashion, who are willing to give the working men words and wind, and votes and the like, and yet think to keep all the advantages, just or unjust, of the wealthier classes without abatement. I do hope wise men will not attempt to fight the working men on the head of this notorious injustice. Any such step will only precipitate the action of the newly enfranchised classes, and irritate them into acting hastily ; when what we ought to desire should be that they should act warily and little for many years to come, until education and habit may make them the more fit.

All this (intended for my father) is much after the fashion of his own correspondence. I confess it has left my own head exhausted ; I hope it may not produce the same effect on yours. But I want him to look really into this question (both sides of it, and not the representations of rabid middle-class newspapers, sworn to support all the little tyrannies of wealth), and I know he will be convinced that this is a case of unjust law ; and that, however desirable the end may seem to him, he will not be Jesuit enough to think that any end will justify an unjust law.

Here ends the political sermon of your affectionate (and somewhat dogmatical) son,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

In the first week of January I went for some necessary work to Paris, with the intention of returning towards the end of the month. The following letter introduces the Russian sisters, Madame

Zassetsky and Madame Garschine, whose society and that of their children was to do so much to cheer Stevenson during his remaining months on the Riviera. The French painter Robinet (sometimes in his day known as *le Raphael des cailloux*, from the minuteness of detail which he put into his Provençal coast landscapes) was a chivalrous and affectionate soul, in whom R. L. S. delighted in spite of his fervent clerical and royalist opinions.

[*Menton*], *January* 7, 1874.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I received yesterday two most charming letters—the nicest I have had since I left—December 26th and January 1st: this morning I got January 3rd.

Into the bargain with Marie, the American girl, who is grace itself, and comes leaping and dancing simply like a wave—like nothing else, and who yesterday was Queen out of the Epiphany cake and chose Robinet (the French painter) as her *favori* with the most pretty confusion possible—into the bargain with Marie, we have two little Russian girls, with the youngest of whom, a little polyglot button of a three-year old, I had the most laughable little scene at lunch to-day. I was watching her being fed with great amusement, her face being as broad as it is long, and her mouth capable of unlimited extension; when suddenly, her eye catching mine, the fashion of her countenance was changed, and regarding me with a really admirable appearance of offended dignity, she said something in Italian which made everybody laugh much. It was explained to me that she had said I was very *polisson* to stare at her. After this she was somewhat taken up with me, and after some examination she announced emphatically to the whole table, in German, that I was a *Mädchen;* which word she repeated with shrill emphasis, as though fearing that her proposition would be called in question—*Mädchen, Mädchen, Mädchen, Mädchen.* This hasty conclusion as to my sex she was led afterwards to revise, I am informed; but her new opinion (which seems to have been something nearer the truth) was announced in a third language quite unknown

to me, and probably Russian. To complete the scroll of her accomplishments, she was brought round the table after the meal was over, and said good-bye to me in very commendable English.

The weather I shall say nothing about, as I am incapable of explaining my sentiments upon that subject before a lady. But my health is really greatly improved: I begin to recognise myself occasionally now and again, not without satisfaction.

Please remember me very kindly to Professor Swan; I wish I had a story to send him; but story, Lord bless you, I have none to tell, sir, unless it is the foregoing adventure with the little polyglot. The best of that depends on the significance of *polisson*, which is beautifully out of place.

Saturday, 10th January.—The little Russian kid is only two and a half: she speaks six languages. She and her sister (æt. 8) and May Johnstone (æt. 8) are the delight of my life. Last night I saw them all dancing—O it was jolly; kids are what is the matter with me. After the dancing, we all—that is the two Russian ladies, Robinet the French painter, Mr. and Mrs. Johnstone, two governesses, and fitful kids joining us at intervals—played a game of the stool of repentance in the Gallic idiom.

O—I have not told you that Colvin is gone; however, he is coming back again; has left clothes in pawn to me.—Ever your affectionate son,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

[*Menton*], *Sunday, 11th January* 1874.

IN many ways this hotel is more amusing than the Pavillon. There are the children, to begin with; and then there are games every evening—the stool of repentance, question and answer, etc.; and then we speak French,

although that is not exactly an advantage in so far as personal brilliancy is concerned.

I am in lovely health again to-day: I walked as far as the Pont St. Louis very nearly, besides walking and knocking about among the olives in the afternoon. I do not make much progress with my French; but I do make a little, I think. I was pleased with my success this evening, though I do not know if others shared the satisfaction.

The two Russian ladies are from Georgia all the way. They do not at all answer to the description of Georgian slaves however, being graceful and refined, and only good-looking after you know them a bit.

Please remember me very kindly to the Jenkins, and thank them for having asked about me. Tell Mrs. J. that I am engaged perfecting myself in the "Gallic idiom," in order to be a worthier Vatel for the future. Monsieur Folleté, our host, is a Vatel by the way. He cooks himself, and is not insensible to flattery on the score of his table. I began, of course, to complain of the wine (part of the routine of life at Mentone); I told him that where one found a kitchen so exquisite, one astonished oneself that the wine was not up to the same form. "Et voilà précisément mon côté faible, monsieur," he replied, with an indescribable amplitude of gesture. "Que voulez-vous? Moi, je suis cuisinier!" It was as though Shakespeare, called to account for some such peccadillo as the Bohemian seaport, should answer magnificently that he was a poet. So Folleté lives in a golden zone of a certain sort—a golden, or rather torrid zone, whence he issues twice daily purple as to his face—and all these clouds and vapours and ephemeral winds pass far below him and disturb him not.

He has another hobby however—his garden, round which it is his highest pleasure to lead the unwilling guest. Whenever he is not in the kitchen, he is hanging round loose, seeking whom he may show his garden to. Much

of my time is passed in studiously avoiding him, and I have brought the art to a very extreme pitch of perfection. The fox, often hunted, becomes wary.—Ever your affectionate son, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

[*Menton*], *Tuesday, 13th January* 1874.

. . . I LOST a Philipine to little Mary Johnstone last night; so to-day I sent her a rubbishing doll's toilet, and a little note with it, with some verses telling how happy children made every one near them happy also, and advising her to keep the lines, and some day, when she was "grown a stately demoiselle," it would make her "glad to know she gave pleasure long ago," all in a very lame fashion, with just a note of prose at the end, telling her to mind her doll and the dog, and not trouble her little head just now to understand the bad verses; for some time when she was ill, as I am now, they would be plain to her and make her happy. She has just been here to thank me, and has left me very happy. Children are certainly too good to be true.

Yesterday I walked too far, and spent all the afternoon on the outside of my bed; went finally to rest at nine, and slept nearly twelve hours on the stretch. Bennet (the doctor), when told of it this morning, augured well for my recovery; he said youth must be putting in strong; of course I ought not to have slept at all. As it was, I dreamed *horridly;* but not my usual dreams of social miseries and misunderstandings and all sorts of crucifixions of the spirit; but of good, cheery, physical things —of long successions of vaulted, dimly lit cellars full of black water, in which I went swimming among toads and unutterable, cold, blind fishes. Now and then these cellars opened up into sort of domed music-hall places, where one could land for a little on the slope of the orchestra,

but a sort of horror prevented one from staying long, and made one plunge back again into the dead waters. Then my dream changed, and I was a sort of Siamese pirate, on a very high deck with several others. The ship was almost captured, and we were fighting desperately. The hideous engines we used and the perfectly incredible carnage that we effected by means of them kept me cheery, as you may imagine; especially as I felt all the time my sympathy with the boarders, and knew that I was only a prisoner with these horrid Malays. Then I saw a signal being given, and knew they were going to blow up the ship. I leaped right off, and heard my captors splash in the water after me as thick as pebbles when a bit of river bank has given way beneath the foot. I never heard the ship blow up; but I spent the rest of the night swimming about some piles with the whole sea full of Malays, searching for me with knives in their mouths. They could swim any distance under water, and every now and again, just as I was beginning to reckon myself safe, a cold hand would be laid on my ankle—ugh!

However, my long sleep, troubled as it was, put me all right again, and I was able to work acceptably this morning and be very jolly all day. This evening I have had a great deal of talk with both the Russian ladies; they talked very nicely, and are bright, likable women both. They come from Georgia.

Wednesday, 10.30.—We have all been to tea to-night at the Russians' villa. Tea was made out of a samovar, which is something like a small steam engine, and whose principal advantage is that it burns the fingers of all who lay their profane touch upon it. After tea Madame Z. played Russian airs, very plaintive and pretty; so the evening was Muscovite from beginning to end. Madame G.'s daughter danced a tarantella, which was very pretty.

Whenever Nelitchka cries—and she never cries except from pain—all that one has to do is to start "Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre." She cannot resist the attraction;

she is drawn through her sobs into the air; and in a moment there is Nellie singing, with the glad look that comes into her face always when she sings, and all the tears and pain forgotten.

It is wonderful, before I shut this up, how that child remains ever interesting to me. Nothing can stale her infinite variety; and yet it is not very various. You see her thinking what she is to do or to say next, with a funny grave air of reserve, and then the face breaks up into a smile, and it is probably "Berecchino!" said with that sudden little jump of the voice that one knows in children, as the escape of a jack-in-the-box, and, somehow, I am quite happy after that! R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Menton, January* 1874], *Wednesday.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is still so cold, I cannot tell you how miserable the weather is. I have begun my "Walt Whitman" again seriously. Many winds have blown since I last laid it down, when sickness took me in Edinburgh. It seems almost like an ill-considered jest to take up these old sentences, written by so different a person under circumstances so different, and try to string them together and organise them into something anyway whole and comely; it is like continuing another man's book. Almost every word is a little out of tune to me now but I shall pull it through for all that and make something that will interest you yet on this subject that I had proposed to myself and partly planned already, before I left for Cockfield last July.

I am very anxious to hear how you are. My own health is quite very good; I am a healthy octogenarian; very old, I thank you and of course not so active as a young man, but hale withal: a lusty December. This is so; such is R. L. S.

I am a little bothered about Bob, a little afraid that he is living too poorly. The fellow he chums with spends only two francs a day on food, with a little excess every day or two to keep body and soul together, and though Bob is not so austere I am afraid he draws it rather too fine himself.

Friday.—We have all got our photographs; it is pretty fair, they say, of me and as they are particular in the matter of photographs, and besides partial judges I suppose I may take that for proven. Of Nellie there is one quite adorable. The weather is still cold. My "Walt Whitman" at last looks really well: I think it is going to get into shape in spite of the long gestation.

Sunday.—Still cold and grey, and a high imperious wind off the sea. I see nothing particularly *couleur de rose* this morning: but I am trying to be faithful to my creed and hope. O yes, one can do something to make things happier and better; and to give a good example before men and show them how goodness and fortitude and faith remain undiminished after they have been stripped bare of all that is formal and outside. We must do that; you have done it already; and I shall follow and shall make a worthy life, and you must live to approve of me. R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

The following are two different impressions of the Mediterranean, dated on two different Mondays in January:—

Yes, I am much better; very much better I think I may say. Although it is funny how I have ceased to be able to write with the improvement of my health. Do you notice how for some time back you have had no descriptions of anything? The reason is that I can't describe anything. No words come to me when I see a thing. I want awfully to tell you to-day about a little "*piece*" of green sea, and gulls, and clouded sky with

the usual golden mountain-breaks to the southward. It was wonderful, the sea near at hand was living emerald; the white breasts and wings of the gulls as they circled above—high above even—were dyed bright green by the reflection. And if you could only have seen or if any right word would only come to my pen to tell you how wonderfully these illuminated birds floated hither and thither under the grey purples of the sky!

To-day has been windy but not cold. The sea was troubled and had a fine fresh saline smell like our own seas, and the sight of the breaking waves, and above all the spray that drove now and again in my face, carried me back to storms that I have enjoyed, O how much! in other places. Still (as Madame Zassetsky justly remarked) there is something irritating in a stormy sea whose waves come always to the same spot and never farther: it looks like playing at passion: it reminds one of the loathsome sham waves in a stage ocean.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Menton, January* 1874.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I write to let you know that my cousin may possibly come to Paris before you leave; he will likely look you up to hear about me, etc. I want to tell you about him before you see him, as I am tired of people misjudging him. You know *me* now. Well, Bob is just such another mutton, only somewhat farther wandered. He has all the same elements of character that I have: no two people were ever more alike, only that the world has gone more unfortunately for him although more evenly. Besides which, he is really a gentleman, and an admirable true friend, which is not a common article. I write this as a letter of introduction in case he should catch you ere you leave.

Monday.—No letters to-day. *Sacré chien, Dieu de Dieu*—and I have written with exemplary industry. But I am hoping that no news is good news and shall continue so to hope until all is blue.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To SIDNEY COLVIN

It had been a very cold Christmas at Monaco and Monte Carlo, and Stevenson had no adequate overcoat, so it was agreed that when I went to Paris I should try and find him a warm cloak or wrap. I amused myself looking for one suited to his taste for the picturesque and piratical in apparel, and found one in the style of 1830–40, dark blue and flowing, and fastening with a snake buckle.

[*Menton, January* 1874], *Friday.*

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Thank you very much for your note. This morning I am stupid again; can do nothing at all; am no good "comme plumitif." I think it must be the cold outside. At least that would explain my addled head and intense laziness.

O why did you tell me about that cloak? Why didn't you buy it? Isn't it in *Julius Cæsar* that Pompey blames —no not Pompey but a friend of Pompey's—well, Pompey's friend, I mean the friend of Pompey—blames somebody else who was his friend—that is who was the friend of Pompey's friend—because he (the friend of Pompey's friend) had not done something right off, but had come and asked him (Pompey's friend) whether he (the friend of Pompey's friend) ought to do it or no? There I fold my hands with some complacency: that's a piece of very good narration. I am getting into good form. These classical instances are always distracting. I was talking of the cloak. It's awfully dear. Are there no cheap and nasty imitations? Think of that—if, however, it were the opinion (ahem) of competent persons that the great cost of the mantle in question was no more than pro-

portionate to its durability; if it were to be a joy for ever; if it would cover my declining years and survive me in anything like integrity for the comfort of my executors; if—I have the word—if the price indicates (as it seems) the quality of *perdurability* in the fabric; if, in fact, it would not be extravagant, but only the leariest economy to lay out £5 .. 15 .. in a single mantle without seam and without price, and if—and if—it really fastens with an agrafe—I would BUY it. But not unless. If not a cheap imitation would be the move.—Ever yours,

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

The following is in answer to a set of numbered questions, of which the first three are of no general interest.

[*Menton*], *Monday, January 19th*, 1874.

ANSWERS to a series of questions.

. . . . . .

4. Nelitchka, or Nelitska, as you know already by this time, is my adorable kid's name. Her laugh does more good to one's health than a month at the seaside: as she said to-day herself, when asked whether she was a boy or a girl, after having denied both with gravity, she is an angel.

5. O no, her brain is not in a chaos; it is only the brains of those who hear her. It is all plain sailing for her. She wishes to refuse or deny anything, and there is the English "No fank you" ready to her hand; she wishes to admire anything, and there is the German "schön"; she wishes to sew (which she does with admirable seriousness and clumsiness), and there is the French "coudre"; she wishes to say she is ill, and there is the Russian "bulla"; she wishes to be down on any one, and there is the Italian "Berecchino"; she wishes to play at a railway train, and there is her own original word

" Collie " (say the o with a sort of Gaelic twirl). And all these words are equally good.

7. I am called M. Stevenson by everybody except Nelitchka, who calls me M. Berecchino.

8. The weather to-day is no end: as bright and as warm as ever. I have been out on the beach all afternoon with the Russians. Madame Garschine has been reading Russian to me; and I cannot tell prose from verse in that delectable tongue, which is a pity. Johnson came out to tell us that Corsica was visible, and there it was over a white, sweltering sea, just a little darker than the pallid blue of the sky, and when one looked at it closely, breaking up into sun-brightened peaks.

I may mention that Robinet has never heard an Englishman with so little accent as I have—ahem—ahem —eh?—What do you say to that? I don't suppose I have said five sentences in English to-day; all French; all bad French, alas!

I am thought to be looking better. Madame Zassetsky said I was all green when I came here first, but that I am all right in colour now, and she thinks fatter. I am very partial to the Russians; I believe they are rather partial to me. I am supposed to be an *esprit observateur! À mon age, c'est étonnant comme je suis observateur!*

The second volume of *Clément Marot* has come. Where and O where is the first?—Ever your affectionate

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To SIDNEY COLVIN

The Bottle here mentioned is a story that had been some time in hand called *The Curate of Anstruther's Bottle*; afterwards abandoned like so many early attempts of the same kind.

[*Menton, January* 1874.]

MY DEAR S. C.,—I suppose this will be my last note then. I think you will find everything very jolly here, I

am very jolly myself. I worked six hours to-day. I am occupied in transcribing *The Bottle*, which is pleasant work to me ; I find much in it that I still think excellent and much that I am doubtful about ; my convention is so terribly difficult that I have to put out much that pleases me, and much that I still preserve I only preserve with misgiving. I wonder if my convention is not a little too hard and too much in the style of those decadent curiosities, poems without the letter E, poems going with the alphabet and the like. And yet the idea, if rightly understood and treated as a convention always and not as an abstract principle, should not so much hamper one as it seems to do. The idea is not, of course, to put in nothing but what would naturally have been noted and remembered and handed down, but not to put in anything that would make a person stop and say —how could this be known ? Without doubt it has the advantage of making one rely on the essential interest of a situation and not cocker up and validify feeble intrigue with incidental fine writing and scenery, and pyrotechnic exhibitions of inappropriate cleverness and sensibility. I remember Bob once saying to me that the quadrangle of Edinburgh University was a good thing and our having a talk as to how it could be employed in different arts. I then stated that the different doors and staircases ought to be brought before a reader of a story not by mere recapitulation but by the use of them, by the descent of different people one after another by each of them. And that the grand feature of shadow and the light of the one lamp in the corner should also be introduced only as they enabled people in the story to see one another or prevented them. And finally that whatever could not thus be worked into the evolution of the action had no right to be commemorated at all. After all, it is a story you are telling ; not a place you are to describe ; and everything that does not attach itself to the story is out of place.

This is a lecture not a letter, and it seems rather like sending coals to Newcastle to write a lecture to a subsidised professor. I hope you have seen Bob by this time. I know he is anxious to meet you and I am in great anxiety to know what you think of his prospects—frankly, of course: as for his person, I don't care a damn what you think of it: I am case-hardened in that matter.

I wrote a French note to Madame Zassetsky the other day, and there were no errors in it. The complete Gaul, as you may see.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

[*Menton, January*, 1874.]

. . . LAST night I had a quarrel with the American on politics. It is odd how it irritates you to hear certain political statements made. He was excited, and he began suddenly to abuse our conduct to America. I, of course, admitted right and left that we had behaved disgracefully (as we had); until somehow I got tired of turning alternate cheeks and getting duly buffeted; and when he said that the Alabama money had not wiped out the injury, I suggested, in language (I remember) of admirable directness and force, that it was a pity they had taken the money in that case. He lost his temper at once, and cried out that his dearest wish was a war with England; whereupon I also lost my temper, and, thundering at the pitch of my voice, I left him and went away by myself to another part of the garden. A very tender reconciliation took place, and I think there will come no more harm out of it. We are both of us nervous people, and he had had a very long walk and a good deal of beer at dinner: that explains the scene a little. But I regret having employed so much of the voice with which I have been endowed, as I fear every person in

the hotel was taken into confidence as to my sentiments, just at the very juncture when neither the sentiments nor (perhaps) the language had been sufficiently considered.

Friday.—You have not yet heard of my book?—*Four Great Scotsmen*—John Knox, David Hume, Robert Burns, Walter Scott. These, their lives, their work, the social media in which they lived and worked, with, if I can so make it, the strong current of the race making itself felt underneath and throughout—this is my idea. You must tell me what you think of it. The Knox will really be new matter, as his life hitherto has been disgracefully written, and the events are romantic and rapid; the character very strong, salient, and worthy; much interest as to the future of Scotland, and as to that part of him which was truly modern under his Hebrew disguise. Hume, of course, the urbane, cheerful, gentlemanly, letter-writing eighteenth century, full of attraction, and much that I don't yet know as to his work. Burns, the sentimental side that there is in most Scotsmen, his poor troubled existence, how far his poems were his personally, and how far national, the question of the framework of society in Scotland, and its fatal effect upon the finest natures. Scott again, the ever delightful man, sane, courageous, admirable; the birth of Romance, in a dawn that was a sunset; snobbery, conservatism, the wrong thread in History, and notably in that of his own land. *Voilà, madame, le menu. Comment le trouvez-vous? Il y a de la bonne viande, si on parvient à la cuire convenablement.* R. L. S.

To Thomas Stevenson

[*Menton*], *Monday, January 26th*, 1874.

MY DEAR FATHER,—Heh! Heh! business letter finished. Receipt acknowledged without much ado, and I think with a certain commercial decision and brevity. The signature is good but not original.

I should rather think I *had* lost my heart to the wee princess. Her mother demanded the other day "*À quand les noces?*" which Mrs. Stevenson will translate for you in case you don't see it yourself.

I had a political quarrel last night with the American; it was a real quarrel for about two minutes; we relieved our feelings and separated; but a mutual feeling of shame led us to a most moving reconciliation, in which the American vowed he would shed his best blood for England. In looking back upon the interview, I feel that I have learned something; I scarcely appreciated how badly England had behaved, and how well she deserves the hatred the Americans bear her. It would have made you laugh if you could have been present and seen your unpatriotic son thundering anathemas in the moonlight against all those that were not the friend of England. Johnson being nearly as nervous as I, we were both very ill after it, which added a further pathos to the reconciliation.

There is no good in sending this off to-day, as I have sent another letter this morning already.

O, a remark of the Princess's amused me the other day. Somebody wanted to give Nelitchka garlic as a medicine. "*Quoi? Une petite amour comme ça, qu'on ne pourrait pas baiser? Il n'y a pas de sens en cela!*"

I am reading a lot of French histories just now, and the spelling keeps one in a good humour all day long—I mean the spelling of English names.—Your affectionate son, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

[*Menton, January* 29, 1874], *Thursday.*

Marot vol. 1 arrived. The post has been at its old games. A letter of the 31st and one of the 2nd arrive at the same moment.

I have had a great pleasure. Mrs. Andrews had a

book of Scotch airs, which I brought over here, and set Madame Z. to work upon. They are so like Russian airs that they cannot contain their astonishment. I was quite out of my mind with delight. "The Flowers of the Forest"—"Auld Lang Syne"—"Scots wha hae"—"Wandering Willie"—"Jock o' Hazeldean"—"My Boy Tammie," which my father whistles so often—I had no conception how much I loved them. The air which pleased Madame Zassetsky the most was "Hey, Johnnie Cope, are ye waukin yet?" It is certainly no end. And I was so proud that they were appreciated. No triumph of my own, I am sure, could ever give me such vainglorious satisfaction. You remember, perhaps, how conceited I was to find "Auld Lang Syne" popular in its German dress; but even that was nothing to the pleasure I had yesterday at the success of our dear airs.

The edition is called *The Songs of Scotland without Words for the Pianoforte*, edited by J. T. Surenne, published by Wood in George Street. As these people have been so kind to me, I wish you would get a copy of this and send it out. If that should be too dear, or anything, Mr. Mowbray would be able to tell you what is the best substitute, would he not? *This* I really would like you to do, as Madame proposes to hire a copyist to copy those she likes, and so it is evident she wants them.—Ever your affectionate son,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO THOMAS STEVENSON

With reference to the political allusions in the following it will be remembered that this was the date of Mr. Gladstone's dissolution, followed by his defeat at the polls notwithstanding his declared intention of abolishing the income-tax.

[*Menton*], *February* 1*st*, 1874.

I AM so sorry to hear of poor Mr. M.'s death. He was really so amiable and kind that no one could help liking

him, and carrying away a pleasant recollection of his simple, happy ways. I hope you will communicate to all the family how much I feel with them.

Madame Zassetsky is Nelitchka's mamma. They have both husbands, and they are in Russia, and the ladies are both here for their health. They make it very pleasant for me here. To-day we all went a drive to the Cap Martin, and the Cap was adorable in the splendid sunshine.

I read J. H. A. Macdonald's speech with interest; his sentiments are quite good, I think. I would support him against M'Laren at once. What has disgusted me most as yet about this election is the detestable proposal to do away with the income tax. Is there no shame about the easy classes? Will those who have nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of the advantage of our society, never consent to pay a single tax unless it is to be paid also by those who have to bear the burthen and heat of the day, with almost none of the reward? And the selfishness here is detestable, because it is so deliberate. A man may not feel poverty very keenly and may live a quiet self-pleasing life in pure thoughtlessness; but it is quite another matter when he knows thoroughly what the issues are, and yet wails pitiably because he is asked to pay a little more, even if it does fall hardly sometimes, than those who get almost none of the benefit. It is like the healthy child crying because they do not give him a goody, as they have given to his sick brother to take away the taste of the dose. I have not expressed myself clearly; but for all that, you ought to understand, I think.

Friday, February 6th.—The wine has arrived, and a dozen of it has been transferred to me; it is much better than Folleté's stuff. We had a masquerade last night at the Villa Marina; Nellie in a little red satin cap, in a red satin suit of boy's clothes, with a funny little black tail that stuck out behind her, and wagged as she danced about the room, and gave her a look of Puss in Boots;

Pella as a contadina; Monsieur Robinet as an old woman, and Mademoiselle as an old lady with blue spectacles.

Yesterday we had a visit from one of whom I had often heard from Mrs. Sellar—Andrew Lang. He is good-looking, delicate, Oxfordish, etc.

My cloak is the most admirable of all garments. For warmth, unequalled; for a sort of pensive, Roman stateliness, sometimes warming into Romantic guitarism, it is simply without concurrent; it starts alone. If you could see me in my cloak, it would impress you. I am hugely better, I think: I stood the cold these last few days without trouble, instead of taking to bed, as I did at Monte Carlo. I hope you are going to send the Scotch music.

I am stupid at letter-writing again; I don't know why. I hope it may not be permanent; in the meantime, you must take what you can get and be hopeful. The Russian ladies are as kind and nice as ever.—Ever your affectionate son, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

[*Menton, February* 6, 1874], *Friday.*

LAST night we had a masquerade at the Villa Marina. Pella was dressed as a contadina and looked beautiful; and little Nellie, in red satin cap and wonderful red satin jacket and little breeches as of a nondescript impossible boy; to which Madame Garschine had slily added a little black tail that wagged comically behind her as she danced about the room, and got deliciously tilted up over the middle bar of the back of her chair as she sat at tea, with an irresistible suggestion of Puss in Boots—well, Nellie thus masqueraded (to get back to my sentence again) was all that I could have imagined. She held herself so straight and stalwart, and had such an infinitesimal dignity of carriage; and then her big baby face, already quite definitely marked with her sex, came in so funnily atop that she got clear away from all my power

of similes and resembled nothing in the world but Nellie in masquerade. Then there was Robinet in a white night gown, old woman's cap (*mutch*, in my vernacular), snuff-box and crutch doubled up and yet leaping and gyrating about the floor with incredible agility; and lastly, Mademoiselle in a sort of elderly walking-dress and with blue spectacles. And all this incongruous impossible world went tumbling and dancing and going hand in hand, in flying circles to the music; until it was enough to make one forget one was in this wicked world, with Conservative majorities and Presidents MacMahon and all other abominations about one.

Also last night will be memorable to me for another reason, Madame Zassetsky having given me a light as to my own intellect. They were talking about things in history remaining in their minds because they had assisted them to generalisations. And I began to explain how things remained in my mind yet more vividly for no reason at all. She got interested, and made me give her several examples; then she said, with her little falsetto of discovery, "Mais c'est que vous êtes tout simplement enfant!" This *mot* I have reflected on at leisure and there is some truth in it. Long may I be so. Yesterday too I finished *Ordered South* and at last had some pleasure and contentment with it. S. C. has sent it off to Macmillan's this morning and I hope it may be accepted; I don't care whether it is or no except for the all-important lucre; the end of it is good, whether the able editor sees it or no.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

[*Menton*], *February 22nd*, 1874.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am glad to hear you are better again: nobody can expect to be *quite* well in February, that is the only consolation I can offer you.

Madame Garschine is ill, I am sorry to say, and was confined to bed all yesterday, which made a great difference to our little society. À propos of which, what keeps me here is just precisely the said society. These people are so nice and kind and intelligent, and then as I shall never see them any more I have a disagreeable feeling about making the move. With ordinary people in England, you have more or less chance of re-encountering one another; at least you may see their death in the papers; but with these people, they die for me and I die for them when we separate.

Andrew Lang, O you of little comprehension, called on Colvin.

You had not told me before about the fatuous person who thought *Roads* like Ruskin—surely the vaguest of contemporaneous humanity. Again my letter writing is of an enfeebled sort.—Ever your affectionate son,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

[*Menton*], *March 1st*, 1874.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—The weather is again beautiful, soft, warm, cloudy and soft again, in provincial sense. Very interesting, I find Robertson; and Dugald Stewart's life of him a source of unquenchable laughter. Dugald Stewart is not much better than M'Crie,[1] and puts me much in mind of him. By the way, I want my father to find out whether any more of Knox's Works was ever issued than the five volumes, as I have them. There are some letters that I am very anxious to see, not printed in any of the five, and perhaps still in MS.

I suppose you are now home again in Auld Reekie: that abode of bliss does not much attract me yet a bit.

Colvin leaves at the end of this week, I fancy.

[1] Thomas M'Crie, D.D., author of the *Life of John Knox*, *Life of Andrew Melville*, etc.

How badly yours sincerely writes. O! Madame Zassetsky has a theory that "Dumbarton Drums" is an epitome of my character and talents. She plays it, and goes into ecstasies over it, taking everybody to witness that each note, as she plays it, is the moral of Berecchino. Berecchino is my stereotype name in the world now. I am announced as M. Berecchino; a German hand-maiden came to the hotel, the other night, asking for M. Berecchino; said hand-maiden supposing in good faith that sich was my name.

Your letter come. O, I am all right now about the parting, because it will not be death, as we are to write. Of course the correspondence will drop off: but that's no odds, it breaks the back of the trouble.—Ever your affectionate son, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

[*Menton*], *Monday, March 9th*, 1874.

WE have all been getting photographed, and the proofs are to be seen to-day. How they will look I know not. Madame Zassetsky arranged me for mine, and then said to the photographer: "*C'est mon fils. Il vient d'avoir dix-neuf ans. Il est tout fier de sa jeune moustache. Tâchez de la faire paraître,*" and then bolted leaving me solemnly alone with the artist. The artist was quite serious, and explained that he would try to "*faire ressortir ce que veut Madame la Princesse*" to the best of his ability; he bowed very much to me, after this, in quality of Prince you see. I bowed in return and handled the flap of my cloak after the most princely fashion I could command.—Ever your affectionate son, R. L. S.

TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

[*Menton*], *March* 20, 1874.

I. *My Cloak.*—An exception occurs to me to the frugality described a letter (or may be two) ago; my

cloak: it would certainly have been possible to have got something less expensive; still it is a fine thought for absent parents that their son possesses simply THE GREATEST vestment in Mentone. It is great in size, and unspeakably great in design; *qua* raiment, it has not its equal.

. . . . . .

III. *About Spain.*—Well, I don't know about *me* and Spain. I am certainly in no humour and in no state of health for voyages and travels. Towards the end of May (see end), up to which time I seem to see my plans, I might be up to it, or I might not; I think *not* myself. I have given up all idea of going on to Italy, though it seems a pity when one is so near; and Spain seems to me in the same category. But for all that, it need not interfere with your voyage thither: I would not lose the chance, if I wanted.

IV. *Money.*—I am much obliged. That makes £180 now. This money irks me, one feels it more than when living at home. However, if I have health, I am in a fair way to make a bit of a livelihood for myself. Now please don't take this up wrong; don't suppose I am thinking of the transaction between you and me; I think of the transaction between me and mankind. I think of all this money wasted in keeping up a structure that may never be worth it—all this good money sent after bad. I shall be seriously angry if you take me up wrong.

V. *Roads.*—The familiar false concord is not certainly a form of colloquialism that I should feel inclined to encourage. It is very odd; I wrote it very carefully, and you seem to have read it very carefully, and yet none of us found it out. The Deuce is in it.

VI. *Russian Prince.*—A cousin of these ladies is come to stay with them—Prince Léon Galitzin. He is the image of—whom?—guess now—do you give it up?—Hillhouse.

VII. *Miscellaneous.*—I send you a pikter of me in the

cloak. I think it is like a hunchback. The moustache is clearly visible to the naked eye—O diable! what do I hear in my lug? A mosquito—the first of the season. Bad luck to him!

Good nicht and joy be wi' you a'. I am going to bed. —Ever your affectionate son,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Note to III.—I had counted on being back at Embro' by the last week or so of May.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

This describes another member of the Russian party, recently arrived at Mentone, who did his best, very nearly with success, to persuade Stevenson to join him in the study of law for some terms under the celebrated Professor Jhering at Göttingen.

[*Menton*], *March* 28, 1874.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—Beautiful weather, perfect weather; sun, pleasant cooling winds; health very good; only incapacity to write.

The only new cloud on my horizon (I mean this in no menacing sense) is the Prince. I have philosophical and artistic discussions with the Prince. He is capable of talking for two hours upon end, developing his theory of everything under Heaven from his first position, which is that there is no straight line. Doesn't that sound like a game of my father's—I beg your pardon, you haven't read it — I don't mean *my* father, I mean Tristram Shandy's. He is very clever, and it is an immense joke to hear him unrolling all the problems of life—philosophy, science, what you will—in this charmingly cut-and-dry, here-we-are-again kind of manner. He is better to listen to than to argue withal. When you differ from him, he lifts up his voice and thunders; and you know that the thunder of an excited foreigner often miscarries. One stands aghast, marvelling how such a colossus of a man,

in such a great commotion of spirit, can open his mouth so much and emit such a still small voice at the hinder end of it all. All this while he walks about the room, smokes cigarettes, occupies divers chairs for divers brief spaces, and casts his huge arms to the four winds like the sails of a mill. He is a most sportive Prince.

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Menton, April* 1874], *Monday.*

My last night at Mentone. I cannot tell how strange and sad I feel. I leave behind me a dear friend whom I have but little hope of seeing again between the eyes.

To-day, I hadn't arranged all my plans till five o'clock: I hired a poor old cabman, whose uncomfortable vehicle and sorry horse make everyone despise him, and set off to get money and say farewells. It was a dark misty evening; the mist was down over all the hills; the peach-trees in beautiful pink bloom. Arranged my plans; that merits a word by the way if I can be bothered. I have half arranged to go to Göttingen in summer to a course of lectures. Galitzin is responsible for this. He tells me the professor is to law what Darwin has been to Natural History, and I should like to understand Roman Law and a knowledge of law is so necessary for all I hope to do.

My poor old cabman; his one horse made me three-quarters of an hour too late for dinner, but I had not the heart to discharge him and take another. Poor soul, he was so pleased with his pourboire, I have made Madame Zassetsky promise to employ him often; so he will be something the better for me, little as he will know it.

I have read *Ordered South;* it is pretty decent I think, but poor, stiff, limping stuff at best—not half so well straightened up as *Roads.* However the stuff is good.

God help us all, this is a rough world: address Hotel St. Romain, rue St. Roch, Paris. I draw the line: a chapter finished.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

The line.

That bit of childishness has made me laugh, do you blame me?

III

STUDENT DAYS—*Concluded*

HOME AGAIN—LITERATURE AND LAW

May 1874–June 1875

Returning to Edinburgh by way of Paris in May 1874, Stevenson went to live with his parents at Swanston and Edinburgh and resumed his reading for the Bar. Illness and absence had done their work, and the old harmony of the home was henceforth quite re-established. In his spare time during the next year he worked hard at his chosen art, trying his hand at essays, short stories, criticisms, and prose poems. In all this experimental writing he had neither the aims nor the facility of the journalist, but strove always after the higher qualities of literature, and was never satisfied with what he had done. To find for all he had to say words of vital aptness and animation—to communicate as much as possible of what he has somewhere called " the incommunicable thrill of things "—was from the first his endeavour in literature, nay more, it was the main passion of his life : and the instrument that should serve his purpose could not be forged in haste. Neither was it easy for this past master of the random, the unexpected, the brilliantly back-foremost and topsy-turvy in talk, to learn in writing the habit of orderly arrangement and organic sequence which even the lightest forms of literature cannot lack.

In the course of this summer Stevenson's excursions included a week or two spent with me at Hampstead, during which he joined the Savile Club and made some acquaintance with London literary society; a yachting trip with his friend Sir Walter Simpson in the western islands of Scotland; a journey to Barmouth and Llandudno with his parents; and in the late autumn a walking tour in Buckinghamshire. The Scottish winter (1874–75) tried him severely, as Scottish winters always did, but was enlivened by a new and what was destined to be a very fruitful and intimate friendship, the origin of which was described in the following letters, namely that of Mr. W. E. Henley. In April 1875 he made his first visit, in the company of his cousin R. A. M. Stevenson to the artist haunts of the forest of Fontainebleau, whence he returned to finish his reading for the Scottish Bar and face the examination which was before him in July. During all this year, as will be seen, his chief, almost his exclusive, correspondents and confidants continued to be the same as in the preceding winter.

To Sidney Colvin

Written in Paris on his way home to Edinburgh. Some of our talk at Mentone had run on the scheme of a spectacle play on the story of the burning of the temple of Diana at Ephesus by Herostratus, the type of insane vanity *in excelsis*.

[*Hôtel St. Romain, Paris, end of April* 1874.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I am a great deal better, but still have to take care. I have got quite a lot of Victor Hugo done; and not I think so badly: pitching into this work has straightened me up a good deal. It is the devil's own weather but that is a trifle. I must know when Cornhill must see it. I can send some of it in a week

easily, but I still have to read *The Laughing Man*,[1] and I mean to wait until I get to London and have the loan of that from you. If I buy anything more this production will not pay itself. The first part is not too well written, though it has good stuff in it.

My people have made no objection to my going to Göttingen; but my body has made I think very strong objections. And you know if it is cold here, it must be colder there. It is a sore pity; that was a great chance for me and it is gone. I know very well that between Galitzin and this swell professor I should have become a good specialist in law and how that would have changed and bettered all my work it is easy to see; however I must just be content to live as I have begun, an ignorant, *chic-y* penny-a-liner. May the Lord have mercy on my soul!

Going home not very well is an astonishing good hold for me. I shall simply be a prince.

Have you had any thought about Diana of the Ephesians? I will straighten up a play for you, but it may take years. A play is a thing just like a story, it begins to disengage itself and then unrolls gradually in block. It will disengage itself some day for me and then I will send you the nugget and you will see if you can make anything out of it.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To MRS. SITWELL

This and the following letters were written after Stevenson's return to Scotland. The essay *Ordered South* appeared in Macmillan's Magazine at this date; that on Victor Hugo's romances in the Cornhill a little later.

[*Swanston*], *May* 1874, *Monday.*

WE are now at Swanston Cottage, Lothianburn, Edinburgh. The garden is but little clothed yet, for, you

[1] *L'Homme qui rit.*

know, here we are six hundred feet above the sea. It is very cold, and has sleeted this morning. Everything wintry. I am very jolly, however, having finished Victor Hugo, and just looking round to see what I should next take up. I have been reading Roman Law and Calvin this morning.

Evening.—I went up the hill a little this afternoon. The air was invigorating, but it was so cold that my scalp was sore. With this high wintry wind, and the grey sky, and faint northern daylight, it was quite wonderful to hear such a clamour of blackbirds coming up to me out of the woods, and the bleating of sheep being shorn in a field near the garden, and to see golden patches of blossom already on the furze, and delicate green shoots upright and beginning to frond out, among last year's russet bracken. Flights of crows were passing continually between the wintry leaden sky and the wintry cold-looking hills. It was the oddest conflict of seasons. A wee rabbit—this year's making, beyond question—ran out from under my feet, and was in a pretty perturbation, until he hit upon a lucky juniper and blotted himself there promptly. Evidently this gentleman had not had much experience of life.

I have made an arrangement with my people: I am to have £84 a year—I only asked for £80 on mature reflection—and as I should soon make a good bit by my pen, I shall be very comfortable. We are all as jolly as can be together, so that is a great thing gained.

Wednesday.—Yesterday I received a letter that gave me much pleasure from a poor fellow-student of mine, who has been all winter very ill, and seems to be but little better even now. He seems very much pleased with *Ordered South.* "A month ago," he says, "I could scarcely have ventured to read it; to-day I felt on reading it as I did on the first day that I was able to sun myself a little in the open air." And much more to the like effect. It is very gratifying.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

Mr. John Morley had asked for a notice by R. L. S. for the Fortnightly Review, which he was then editing, of Lord Lytton's newly published volume, *Fables in Song*.

Swanston, Lothianburn, Edinburgh [*May* 1874].

All right. I'll see what I can do. Before I could answer I had to see the book; and my good father, after trying at all our libraries, bought it for me. I like the book; that is some of it and I'll try to lick up four or five pages for the Fortnightly.

It is still as cold as cold, hereaway. And the Spring hammering away at the New Year in despite. Poor Spring, scattering flowers with red hands and preparing for Summer's triumphs all in a shudder herself. Health still good, and the humour for work enduring.

Jenkin wrote to say he would second me in such a kind little notelet. I shall go in for it (the Savile I mean) whether *Victor Hugo* is accepted or not, being now a man of means. Have I told you by the way that I have now an income of £84, or as I prefer to put it for dignity's sake, two thousand one hundred francs, a year.

In lively hope of better weather and your arrival hereafter.—I remain, yours ever, R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

Swanston, Wednesday, May 1874.

Struggling away at *Fables in Song*. I am much afraid I am going to make a real failure; the time is so short, and I am so out of the humour. Otherwise very calm and jolly: cold still *impossible*.

Thursday.—I feel happier about the *Fables*, and it is warmer a bit; but my body is most decrepit, and I can just manage to be cheery and tread down hypochondria under foot by work. I lead such a funny life, utterly

without interest or pleasure outside of my work: nothing, indeed, but work all day long, except a short walk alone on the cold hills, and meals, and a couple of pipes with my father in the evening. It is surprising how it suits me, and how happy I keep.

Friday.—"My dear Stevenson how do you do? do you annoying yourself or no? when we go to the Olivses it allways rememberse us you. Nelly and my aunt went away. And when the organ come and play the Soldaten it mak us think of Nelly. It is so sad! allmoste went away. I make my baths; and then we go to Franzensbad; will you come to see us?"

There is Pella's letter facsimile, punctuation, spelling and all. Mme. Garschine's was rather sad and gave me the blues a bit; I think it very likely I may run over to Franzensbad for a week or so this autumn, if I am wanted that is to say: I shall be able to afford it easily.

I have got on rather better with the *Fables;* perhaps it won't be a failure, though I fear. To-day the sun shone brightly although the wind was cold: I was up the hill a good time. It is very solemn to see the top of one hill steadfastly regarding you over the shoulder of another: I never before to-day fully realised the haunting of such a gigantic face, as it peers over into a valley and seems to command all corners. I had a long talk with the shepherd about foreign lands, and sheep. A Russian had once been on the farm as a pupil; he told me that he had the utmost pity for the Russian's capacities, since (dictionary and all) he had never managed to understand him; it must be remembered that my friend the shepherd spoke Scotch of the broadest and often enough employs words which I do not understand myself.

Saturday.—I have received such a nice long letter (four sides) from Leslie Stephen to-day about my *Victor Hugo.* It is accepted. This ought to have made me gay, but it hasn't. I am not likely to be much of a tonic to-night. I have been very cynical over myself to-day,

partly, perhaps, because I have just finished some of the deedest rubbish about Lord Lytton's *Fables* that an intelligent editor ever shot into his wastepaper basket. If Morley prints it I shall be glad, but my respect for him will be shaken. R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

Enclosing Mr. Leslie Stephen's letter accepting the article on Victor Hugo: the first of Stevenson's many contributions to the Cornhill Magazine.

[*Edinburgh, May* 1874.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I send you L. Stephen's letter which is certainly very kind and jolly to get.[1] I wrote

[1] This letter, accepting the first contribution of R. L. S., has by an accident been preserved, and is so interesting, both for its occasion and for the light it throws on the writer's care and kindness as an editor, that by permission of his representatives I here print it. '93 stands, of course, for the novel *Quatre-vingt Treize*.

15 *Waterloo Place, S.W.*, 15/5/74

DEAR SIR,—I have read with great interest your article on Victor Hugo and also that which appeared in the last number of Macmillan. I shall be happy to accept Hugo, and if I have been rather long in answering you, it is only because I wished to give a second reading to the article, and have lately been very much interrupted.

I will now venture to make a few remarks, and by way of preface I must say that I do not criticise you because I take a low view of your powers: but for the very contrary reason. I think very highly of the promise shown in your writings and therefore think it worth while to write more fully than I can often to contributors. Nor do I set myself up as a judge—I am very sensible of my own failings in the critical department and merely submit what has occurred to me for your consideration.

I fully agree with the greatest portion of your opinions and think them very favourably expressed. The following points struck me as doubtful when I read and may perhaps be worth notice.

First, you seem to make the distinction between dramatic and novelistic art coincide with the distinction between romantic and 18th century. This strikes me as doubtful, as at least to require qualification. To my mind Hugo is far more dramatic in spirit than Fielding, though his method involves (as you show exceedingly well) a use of scenery and background which would hardly be admissible in drama. I am not able—I fairly confess—

some stuff about Lord Lytton, but I had not the heart to submit it to you. I sent it direct to Morley, with a Spartan billet. God knows it is bad enough; but it cost

to define the dramatic element in Hugo or to say why I think it absent from Fielding and Richardson. Yet surely Hugo's own dramas are a sufficient proof that a drama may be romantic as well as a novel: though, of course, the pressure of the great moral forces, etc., must be indicated by different means. The question is rather a curious one and too wide to discuss in a letter. I merely suggest what seems to me to be an obvious criticism on your argument.

Secondly, you speak very sensibly of the melodramatic and clap-trap element in Hugo. I confess that it seems to me to go deeper into his work than you would apparently allow. I think it, for example, very palpable even in *Notre Dame*, and I doubt the historical fidelity though my ignorance of mediæval history prevents me from putting my finger on many faults. The consequence is that in my opinion you are scarcely just to Scott or Fielding as compared with Hugo. Granting fully his amazing force and fire, he seems to me to be deficient often in that kind of healthy realism which is so admirable in Scott's best work. For example, though my Scotch blood (for I can boast of some) may prejudice me I am profoundly convinced that Balfour of Burley would have knocked M. Lantenac into a cocked hat and stormed la Tourgue if it had been garrisoned by 19 × 19 French spouters of platitude in half the time that Gauvain and Cimourdain took about it. In fact, Balfour seems to me to be flesh and blood and Gauvain & Co. to be too often mere personified bombast: and therefore I fancy that *Old Mortality* will outlast '93, though *Notre Dame* is far better than *Quentin Durward*, and *Les Misérables*, perhaps, better than any. This is, of course, fair matter of opinion.

Thirdly, I don't think that you quite bring out your meaning in saying that '93 is a decisive symptom. I confess that I don't quite see in what sense it decides precisely what question. A sentence or so would clear this up.

Fourthly, as a matter of form, I think (but I am very doubtful) that it might possibly have been better not to go into each novel in succession; but to group the substance of your remarks a little differently. Of course I don't want you to alter the form, I merely notice the point as suggesting a point in regard to any future article.

Many of your criticisms in detail strike me as very good. I was much pleased by your remarks on the storm in the *Travailleurs*. There was another very odd storm, as it struck me on a hasty reading in '93, where there is mention of a beautiful summer evening and yet the wind is so high that you can't hear the tocsin. You do justice also and more than justice to Hugo's tenderness about children. That, I think, points to one great source of his power.

me labour incredible. I was so out of the vein, it would have made you weep to see me digging the rubbish out of my seven wits with groanings unutterable. I certainly mean to come to London, and likely before long if all goes well; so on that ground, I cannot force you to come to Scotland. Still, the weather is now warm and jolly, and of course it would not be expensive to live here so long as that did not bore you. If you could see the hills out of my window to-night, you would start incontinent. However do as you will, and if the mountain will not come to Mahomet Mahomet will come to the mountain in due time, Mahomet being me and the mountain you, Q.E.D., F.R.S.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To MRS. SITWELL

[*Swanston, May* 1874], *Tuesday.*

ANOTHER cold day; yet I have been along the hillside, wondering much at idiotic sheep, and raising partridges at every second step. One little plover is the object of my firm adherence. I pass his nest every day, and if you saw how he flies by me, and almost into my face, crying and flapping his wings, to direct my attention from his little treasure, you would have as kind a heart to him as I. To-day I saw him not, although I took my usual way; and I am afraid that some person has abused his

It would be curious to compare Hugo to a much smaller man, Chas. Reade, who is often a kind of provincial or Daily Telegraph Hugo. However that would hardly do in the Cornhill. I shall send your article to the press and hope to use it in July. Any alterations can be made when the article is in type, if any are desirable. I cannot promise definitely in advance; but at any rate it shall appear as soon as may be.

Excuse this long rigmarole and believe me to be, yours very truly, LESLIE STEPHEN.

I shall hope to hear from you again. If ever you come to town you will find me at 8 Southwell Gardens (close to the Gloucester Road Station of the Underground). I am generally at home, except from 3 to 5.

simple wiliness and harried (as we say in Scotland) the nest. I feel much righteous indignation against such imaginary aggressor. However, one must not be too chary of the lower forms. To-day I sat down on a tree-stump at the skirt of a little strip of planting, and thoughtlessly began to dig out the touchwood with an end of twig. I found I had carried ruin, death, and universal consternation into a little community of ants; and this set me a-thinking of how close we are environed with frail lives, so that we can do nothing without spreading havoc over all manner of perishable homes and interests and affections; and so on to my favourite mood of an holy terror for all action and all inaction equally—a sort of shuddering revulsion from the necessary responsibilities of life. We must not be too scrupulous of others, or we shall die. Conscientiousness is a sort of moral opium; an excitant in small doses, perhaps, but at bottom a strong narcotic.

Saturday.—I have been two days in Edinburgh, and so had not the occasion to write to you. Morley has accepted the *Fables*, and I have seen it in proof, and think less of it than ever. However, of course, I shall send you a copy of the magazine without fail, and you can be as disappointed as you like, or the reverse if you can. I would willingly recall it if I could.

Try, by way of change, Byron's *Mazeppa;* you will be astonished. It is grand and no mistake, and one sees through it a fire, and a passion, and a rapid intuition of genius, that makes one rather sorry for one's own generation of better writers, and—I don't know what to say; I was going to say "smaller men"; but that's not right; read it, and you will feel what I cannot express. Don't be put out by the beginning; persevere, and you will find yourself thrilled before you are at an end with it.

Sunday.—The white mist has obliterated the hills and lies heavily round the cottage, as though it were laying siege to it; the trees wave their branches in the

wind, with a solemn melancholy manner, like people swaying themselves to and fro in pain. I am alone in the house, all the world being gone to church ; and even in here at the side of the fire, the air clings about one like a wet blanket. Yet this morning, when I was just awake, I had thought it was going to be a fine day. First, a cock crew, loudly and beautifully and often ; then followed a long interval of silence and darkness, the grey morning began to get into my room ; and then from the other side of the garden, a blackbird executed one long flourish, and in a moment as if a spring had been touched or a sluice-gate opened, the whole garden just brimmed and ran over with bird-songs.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

For a part of June Stevenson had come south, spending most of his time in lodgings with me at Hampstead (where he got the idea for part of his essay *Notes on the Movements of Young Children*) and making his first appearance at the Savile Club. Trouble awaited him after his return.

[*Swanston, June* 1874], *Wednesday.*

NEWS reaches me that Bob is laid down with diphtheria ; and you know what that means.

Night.—I am glad to say that I have on the whole a good account of Bob and I do hope he may pull through in spite of all. I went down and saw the doctor ; but it is not thought right that I should go in to see him in case of contagion : you know it is a very contagious malady.

Thursday.—It is curious how calm I am in such a case. I wait with perfect composure for farther news ; I can do nothing ; why should I disturb myself ? And yet if things go wrong I shall be in a fine way I can tell you.

How curiously we are built up into our false positions. The other day, having toothache and the black dog on my back generally, I was rude to one of the servants at

the dinner-table. And nothing of course can be more disgusting than for a man to speak harshly to a young woman who will lose her place if she speak back to him; and of course I determined to apologise. Well, do you know, it was perhaps four days before I found courage enough, and I felt as red and ashamed as could be. Why? because I had been rude? not a bit of it; because I was doing a thing that would be called ridiculous in thus apologising. I did not know I had so much respect of middle-class notions before; this is my right hand which I must cut off. Hold the arm please: once—twice—thrice: the offensive member is amputated: let us hope I shall never be such a cad any more as to be ashamed of being a gentleman.

Night.—I suppose I must have been more affected than I thought; at least I found I could not work this morning and had to go out. The whole garden was filled with a high westerly wind, coming straight out of the hills and richly scented with furze—or whins, as we would say. The trees were all in a tempest and roared like a heavy surf; the paths all strewn with fallen apple-blossom and leaves. I got a quiet seat behind a yew and went away into a meditation. I was very happy after my own fashion, and whenever there came a blink of sunshine or a bird whistled higher than usual, or a little powder of white apple-blossom came over the hedge and settled about me in the grass, I had the gladdest little flutter at my heart and stretched myself for very voluptuousness. I wasn't altogether taken up with my private pleasures, however, and had many a look down ugly vistas in the future, for Bob and others. But we must all be content and brave, and look eagerly for these little passages of happiness by the wayside, and go on afterwards, savouring them under the tongue.

Friday.—Our garden has grown beautiful at last, beautiful with fresh foliage and daisied grass. The sky is still cloudy and the day perhaps even a little gloomy;

but under this grey roof, in this shaded temperate light, how delightful the new summer is.

When I shall come to London must always be problematical like all my movements, and of course this sickness of Bob's makes it still more uncertain. If all goes well I may have to go to the country and take care of him in his convalescence. But I shall come shortly. Do not hurry to write to me; I had rather *you* had ten minutes more of good, friendly sleep, than I a longer letter; and you know I am rather partial to your letters. Yesterday, by the bye, I received the proof of *Victor Hugo;* it is not nicely written, but the stuff is capital, I think. Modesty is my most remarkable quality, I may remark in passing.

1.30.—I was out, behind the yew hedge, reading the *Comtesse de Rudolstadt* when I found my eyes grow weary, and looked up from the book. O the rest of the quiet greens and whites, of the daisied surface! I was very peaceful, but it began to sprinkle rain and so I fain to come in for a moment and chat with you. By the way, I must send you *Consuelo;* you said you had quite forgotten it if I remember aright; and surely a book that could divert me, when I thought myself on the very edge of the grave, from the work that I so much desired and was yet unable to do, and from many painful thoughts, should somewhat support and amuse you under all the hard things that may be coming upon you. If you should wonder why I am writing to you so voluminously, know that it is because I am not suffering myself to work, and in idleness, as in death, etc. . .

Saturday.—I have had a very cruel day. I heard this morning that yesterday Bob had been very much worse and I went down to Portobello with all sorts of horrible presentiments. I was glad when I turned the corner and saw the blinds still up. He was definitely better, if the word definitely can be used about such a detestably insidious complaint. I have ordered *Consuelo* for you,

and you should have it soon this week; I mean next week of course; I am thinking when you will receive this letter, not of now when I am writing it.

I am so tired; but I am very hopeful. All will be well some time, if it be only when we are dead. One thing I see so clearly. Death is the end neither of joy nor sorrow. Let us pass into the clods and come up again as grass and flowers; we shall still be this wonderful, shrinking, sentient matter—we shall still thrill to the sun and grow relaxed and quiet after rain, and have all manner of pains and pleasures that we know not of now. Consciousness, and ganglia, and suchlike, are after all but theories. And who knows? This God may not be cruel when all is done; he may relent and be good to us *à la fin des fins*. Think of how he tempers our afflictions to us, of how tenderly he mixes in bright joys with the grey web of trouble and care that we call our life. Think of how he gives, who takes away. Out of the bottom of the miry clay I write this; and I look forward confidently; I have faith after all; I believe, I hope, I *will* not have it reft from me; there *is* something good behind it all, bitter and terrible as it seems. The infinite majesty (as it will be always in regard to us the bubbles of an hour) the infinite majesty must have moments, if it were no more, of greatness; must sometimes be touched with a feeling for our infirmities, must sometimes relent and be clement to those frail playthings that he has made, and made so bitterly alive. Must it not be so, my dear friend, out of the depths I cry? I feel it, now when I am most painfully conscious of his cruelty. He must relent. He must reward. He must give some indemnity, if it were but in the quiet of a daisy, tasting of the sun and the soft rain and the sweet shadow of trees, for all the dire fever that he makes us bear in this poor existence. We make too much of this human life of ours. It may be that two clods together, two flowers together, two grown trees together touching each other deliciously with their spread leaves, it may be that

these dumb things have their own priceless sympathies, surer and more untroubled than ours.

I don't know quite whether I have wandered. Forgive me, I feel as if I had relieved myself; so perhaps it may not be unpleasant for you either.—Believe me, ever your faithful friend, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

Swanston, Sunday (*June* 1874).

DEAR FRIEND,—I fear to have added something to your troubles by telling you of the grief in which I find myself; but one cannot always come to meet a friend smiling, although we should try for the best cheer possible. All to-day I have been very weary, resting myself after the trouble and fatigue of yesterday. The day was warm enough, but it blew a whole gale of wind; and the noise and the purposeless rude violence of it somehow irritated and depressed me. There was good news however, though the anxiety must still be long. O peace, peace, whither are you fled and where have you carried my old quiet humour? I am so bitter and disquiet and speak even spitefully to people. And somehow, though I promise myself amendment, day after day finds me equally rough and sour to those about me. But this would pass with good health and good weather; and at bottom I am not unhappy; the soil is still good although it bears thorns; and the time will come again for flowers.

Wednesday.—I got your letter this morning and have to thank you so much for it. Bob is much better; and I do hope out of danger. To-day has been more glorious than I can tell you. It has been the first day of blue sky that we have had; and it was happiness for a week to see the clear bright outline of the hills and the glory of sunlit foliage and the darkness of green shadows, and the big white clouds that went voyaging overhead deliberately. My two cousins from Portobello were here; and

they and I and Maggie ended the afternoon by lying half an hour together on a shawl. The big cloud had all been carded out into a thin luminous white gauze, miles away; and miles away too seemed the little black birds that passed between this and us as we lay with faces upturned. The similarity of what we saw struck in us a curious similarity of mood; and in consequence of the small size of the shawl, we all lay so close that we half pretended, half felt, we had lost our individualities and had become merged and mixed up in a quadruple existence. We had the shadow of an umbrella over ourselves, and when any one reached out a brown hand into the golden sunlight overhead we all feigned that we did not know whose hand it was, until at last I don't really think we quite did. Little black insects also passed over us and in the same half wanton manner we pretended we could not distinguish them from the birds. There was a splendid sunlit silence about us, and as Katharine said the heavens seemed to be dropping oil on us, or honey-dew—it was all so bland.

Thursday evening.—I have seen Bob again, and I am charmed at his convalescence. Le bon Dieu has been *so* bon this time: here's his health! Still the danger is not over by a good way; it is so miserable a thing for reverses.

I hear the wind outside roaring among our leafy trees as the surf on some loud shore. The hill-top is whelmed in a passing rain-shower and the mist lies low in the valleys. But the night is warm and in our little sheltered garden it is fair and pleasant, and the borders and hedges and evergreens and boundary trees are all distinct in an equable diffusion of light from the buried moon and the day not altogether passed away. My dear friend, as I hear the wind rise and die away in that tempestuous world of foliage, I seem to be conscious of I know not what breath of creation. I know what this warm wet wind of the west betokens, I know how already, in this morning's

sunshine, we could see all the hills touched and accentuated with little delicate golden patches of young fern; how day by day the flowers thicken and the leaves unfold; how already the year is a-tip-toe on the summit of its finished youth; and I am glad and sad to the bottom of my heart at the knowledge. If you knew how different I am from what I was last year; how the knowledge of you has changed and finished me, you would be glad and sad also.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

The strain of anxiety recorded in the two last letters had given a shake to Stevenson's own health, and it was agreed that he should go for a yachting tour with Sir Walter Simpson in the Inner Hebrides.

[*Edinburgh, June* 1874], *Thursday.*

I HAVE been made so miserable by Chopin's *Marche funèbre.* Try two of Schubert's songs, "*Ich unglückselige Atlas*" and "*Du schönes Fischermädchen*"—they are very jolly. I have read aloud my death-cycle from Walt Whitman this evening. I was very much affected myself, never so much before, and it fetched the auditory considerable. Reading these things that I like aloud when I am painfully excited is the keenest artistic pleasure I know. It does seem strange that these dependent arts —singing, acting, and in its small way reading aloud seem the best rewarded of all arts. I am sure it is more exciting for me to read than it was for W. W. to write; and how much more must this be so with singing.

Friday.—I am going in the yacht on Wednesday. I am not right yet, and I hope the yacht will set me up. I am too tired to-night to make more of it. Good-bye. —Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Edinburgh, June* 1874], *Friday.*

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I am seedy—very seedy, I may say. I am quite unfit for any work or any pleasure ; and generally very sick. I am going away next week on Wednesday for my cruise which I hope will set me up again. I should like a proof here up to Wednesday morning, or at Greenock, Tontine Hotel, up to Friday morning, as I don't quite know my future address. I hope you are better, and that it was not that spell of work you had that did the harm. It is to my spurt of work that I am *redevable* for my harm. Walt Whitman is at the bottom of it all, *'cré nom !* What a pen I have !—a new pen, God be praised, how smoothly it functions ! Would that I could work as well. Chorus—Would that both of us could work as well—would that all of us could work as well !—Ever yours, Robert Louis Stevenson.

P.S.—Bob is better ; but he might be better yet. All goes smoothly except my murrained health.

To Mrs. Sitwell

Swanston [*Summer* 1874].

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am back again here, as brown as a berry with sun, and in good form. I have been and gone and lost my portmanteau, with *Walt Whitman* in it and a lot of notes. This is a nuisance. However, I am pretty happy, only wearying for news of you and for your address.

Friday.—À la bonne heure ! I hear where you are and that you are apparently fairish well. That is good at least. I am full of Reformation work ; up to the eyes in it ; and begin to feel learned. A beautiful day outside, though something cold. R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

Of the projects here mentioned, that of the little book of essays on the enjoyment of the world never took shape, nor were those contributions towards it which he printed in the Portfolio ever re-published until after the writer's death. *The Appeal to the Clergy of the Church of Scotland* was printed in 1874, published as a pamphlet in February 1875, and attracted, I believe, no attention whatever. The " fables " must have been some of the earliest numbers of the series continued at odd times till near the date of his death and published posthumously: I do not know which, but should guess *The House of Eld*, *Yellow Paint*, and perhaps those in the vein of Celtic mystery, *The Touchstone*, *The Poor Thing*, *The Song of To-morrow*.

[*Swanston, Summer* 1874], *Tuesday.*

MY DEAR COLVIN,—What is new with you? There is nothing new with me: Knox and his females begin to get out of restraint altogether; the subject expands so damnably, I know not where to cut it off. I have another paper for the PTFL[1] on the stocks: a sequel to the two others; also, that is to say, a word in season as to contentment and a hint to the careless to look around them for disregarded pleasures. Seeley wrote to me asking me " to propose " something: I suppose he means —well, I suppose I don't know what he means. But I shall write to him (if you think it wise) when I send him this paper, saying that my writing is more a matter of God's disposition than of man's proposal; that I had from *Roads* upward ever intended to make a little budget of little papers all with this intention before them, call it ethical or æsthetic as you will; and thus I shall leave it to him (if he likes) to regard this little budget, as slowly they come forth, as a unity in its own small way. Twelve or twenty such essays, some of them mainly ethical and expository, put together in a little book with narrow print in each page, antique, vine leaves about, and the following title.

[1] Portfolio.

XII (OR XX) ESSAYS ON THE ENJOYMENT OF THE WORLD:
By Robert Louis Stevenson
(*A motto in italics*)
Publisher
Place and date

You know the class of old book I have in my head. I smack my lips; would it not be nice! I am going to launch on Scotch ecclesiastical affairs, in a tract addressed to the Clergy; in which doctrinal matters being laid aside, I contend simply that they should be just and dignified men at a certain crisis: this for the honour of humanity. Its authorship must, of course, be secret or the publication would be useless. You shall have a copy of course, and may God help you to understand it.

I have done no more to my fables. I find I must let things take their time. I am constant to my schemes; but I must work at them fitfully as the humour moves.

—To return, I wonder, if I have to make a budget of such essays as I dream, whether Seeley would publish them: I should give them unity, you know, by the doctrinal essays; nor do I think these would be the least agreeable. You must give me your advice and tell me whether I should throw out this delicate feeler to R. S.[1]; or if not, what I am to say to this "proposal" business.

I shall go to England or Wales, with parents, shortly: after which, dash to Poland before setting in for the dismal session at Edinburgh.

Spirits good, with a general sense of hollowness underneath: wanity of wanities etc.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S.—Parents capital; thanks principally to them; yours truly still rather bitter, but less so.

[1] Richmond Seeley.

To Sidney Colvin

The last paragraph of the following means that Dr. Appleton, the amiable and indefatigable editor of the Academy, then recently founded, had been a little disturbed in mind by some of the contributions of his brilliant young friend, but allowed his academic conscience to be salved by the fact of their signature.

[*Swanston, Summer* 1874.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Am I mad? Have I lived thus long and have you known me thus long, to no purpose? Do you imagine I could ever write an essay a month, or promise an essay even every three months? I declare I would rather die than enter into any such arrangement. The Essays must fall from me, Essay by Essay, as they ripen; and all that my communication with Seeley would effect would be to make him see more in them than mere occasional essays; or at least *look* far more faithfully, in which spirit men rarely look in vain. You know both *Roads* and my little girls[1] are a part of the scheme which dates from early at Mentone. My word to Seeley, therefore, would be to inform him of what I hope will lie ultimately behind them, of how I regard them as contributions towards a friendlier and more thoughtful way of looking about one, etc. One other purpose of telling him would be that I should feel myself more at liberty to write as I please, and not bound to drag in a tag about Art every time to make it more suitable. Tying myself down to time is an impossibility. You know my own description of myself as a person with a poetic character and no poetic talent: just as my prose muse has all the ways of a poetic one, and I must take my Essays as they come to me. If I got 12 of 'em done in two years, I should be pleased. Never, please, let yourself imagine that I am fertile; I am constipated in the brains.

Look here, Appleton dined here last night and was delightful after the manner of our Appleton: I was none

[1] The essay *Notes on the Movements of Young Children.*

the less pleased, because I was somewhat amused, to hear of your kind letter to him in defence of my productions. I was amused at the tranquil dishonesty with which he told me that I must put my name to all I write and then all will be well.—Yours ever, R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

Written on an expedition to Wales with his parents.

Train between Edinburgh and Chester, August 8, 1874.

My father and mother reading. I think I shall talk to you for a moment or two. This morning at Swanston, the birds, poor creatures, had the most troubled hour or two; evidently there was a hawk in the neighbourhood; not one sang; and the whole garden thrilled with little notes of warning and terror. I did not know before that the voice of birds could be so tragically expressive. I had always heard them before express their trivial satisfaction with the blue sky and the return of daylight. Really, they almost frightened me; I could hear mothers and wives in terror for those who were dear to them; it was easy to translate, I wish it were as easy to write; but it is very hard in this flying train, or I would write you more.

Chester.—I like this place much; but somehow I feel glad when I get among the quiet eighteenth century buildings, in cosy places with some elbow room about them, after the older architecture. This other is bedevilled and furtive; it seems to stoop; I am afraid of trap-doors, and could not go pleasantly into such houses. I don't know how much of this is legitimately the effect of the architecture; little enough possibly; possibly far the most part of it comes from bad historical novels and the disquieting statuary that garnishes some façades.

On the way, to-day, I passed through my dear Cumberland country. Nowhere to as great a degree can one find the combination of lowland and highland beauties; the outline of the blue hills is broken by the outline of many tumultuous tree-clumps; and the broad spaces of moorland are balanced by a network of deep hedgerows that might rival Suffolk, in the foreground.—How a railway journey shakes and discomposes one, mind and body! I grow blacker and blacker in humour as the day goes on; and when at last I am let out, and have the fresh air about me, it is as though I were born again, and the sick fancies flee away from my mind like swans in spring.

I want to come back on what I have said about eighteenth century and middle-age houses: I do not know if I have yet explained to you the sort of loyalty, of urbanity, that there is about the one to my mind; the spirit of a country orderly and prosperous, a flavour of the presence of magistrates and well-to-do merchants in bag-wigs, the clink of glasses at night in fire-lit parlours, something certain and civic and domestic, is all about these quiet, staid, shapely houses, with no character but their exceeding shapeliness, and the comely external utterance that they make of their internal comfort. Now the others are, as I have said, both furtive and bedevilled; they are sly and grotesque; they combine their sort of feverish grandeur with their sort of secretive baseness, after the manner of a Charles the Ninth. They are peopled for me with persons of the same fashion. Dwarfs and sinister people in cloaks are about them; and I seem to divine crypts, and, as I said, trap-doors. O God be praised that we live in this good daylight and this good peace.

Barmouth, August 9th.—To-day we saw the cathedral at Chester; and, far more delightful, saw and heard a certain inimitable verger who took us round. He was full of a certain recondite, far-away humour that did not

quite make you laugh at the time, but was somehow laughable to recollect. Moreover, he had so far a just imagination, and could put one in the right humour for seeing an old place, very much as, according to my favourite text, Scott's novels and poems do for one. His account of the monks in the Scriptorium, with their cowls over their heads, in a certain sheltered angle of the cloister where the big cathedral building kept the sun off the parchments, was all that could be wished; and so too was what he added of the others pacing solemnly behind them and dropping, ever and again, on their knees before a little shrine there is in the wall, "to keep 'em in the frame of mind." You will begin to think me unduly biassed in this verger's favour if I go on to tell you his opinion of me. We got into a little side chapel, whence we could hear the choir children at practice, and I stopped a moment listening to them, with, I dare say, a very bright face, for the sound was delightful to me. "Ah," says he, "you're *very* fond of music." I said I was. "Yes, I could tell that by your head," he answered. "There's a deal in that head." And he shook his own solemnly. I said it might be so, but I found it hard, at least, to get it out. Then my father cut in brutally, said anyway I had no ear, and left the verger so distressed and shaken in the foundations of his creed that, I hear, he got my father aside afterwards and said he was sure there was something in my face, and wanted to know what it was, if not music. He was relieved when he heard that I occupied myself with literature (which word, note here, I do now spell correctly). Good-night, and here's the verger's health!

Friday.—Yesterday received the letter you know of. I have finished my Portfolio paper, not very good but with things in it: I don't know if they will take it; and I have got a good start made with my *John Knox* articles. The weather here is rainy and miserable and windy: it is warm and not over boisterous for a certain sort of

pleasure. This place, as I have made my first real inquisition into it to-night is curious enough; all the days I have been here, I have been at work, and so I was quite new to it.

Saturday.—A most beautiful day. We took a most beautiful drive, also up the banks of the river. The heather and furze are in flower at once and make up a splendid richness of colour on the hills; the trees were beautiful; there was a bit of winding road with larches on one hand and oaks on the other; the oaks were in shadow and printed themselves off at every corner on the sunlit background of the larches. We passed a little family of children by the roadside. The youngest of all sat a good way apart from the others on the summit of a knoll; it was ensconced in an old tea-box, out of which issued its head and shoulders in a blue cloak and scarlet hat. O if you could have seen its dignity! It was deliciously humorous: and this little piece of comic self-satisfaction was framed in wonderfully by the hills and the sunlit estuary. We saw another child in a cottage garden. She had been sick, it seemed, and was taking the air quietly for health's sake. Over her pale face, she had decorated herself with all available flowers and weeds; and she was driving one chair as a horse, sitting in another by way of carriage. We cheered her as we passed, and she acknowledged the compliment like a queen. I like children better every day, I think, and most other things less. *John Knox* goes on, and a horrible story of a nurse which I think almost too cruel to go on with: I wonder why my stories are always so nasty.[1] I am still well, and in good spirits. I say, by the way, have you any means of finding Madame Garschine's address. If you have, communicate with me. I fear my last letter has been too late to catch her at Franzensbad; and so I shall have to go without my visit altogether, which would vex me. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

[1] I remember nothing of either the title or the tenor of this story.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Barmouth, September* 1874], *Tuesday.*

I wonder if you ever read Dickens' Christmas books? I don't know that I would recommend you to read them, because they are too much perhaps. I have only read two of them yet, and feel so good after them and would do anything, yes and shall do everything, to make it a little better for people. I wish I could lose no time; I want to go out and comfort some one; I shall never listen to the nonsense they tell one about not giving money—I *shall* give money; not that I haven't done so always, but I shall do it with a high hand now.

It is raining here; and I have been working at John Knox, and at the horrid story I have in hand, and walking in the rain. Do you know this story of mine is horrible; I only work at it by fits and starts, because I feel as if it were a sort of crime against humanity—it is so cruel.

Wednesday.—I saw such nice children again to-day; one little fellow alone by the roadside, putting a stick into a spout of water and singing to himself—so wrapt up that we had to poke him with our umbrellas to attract his attention; and again, two solid, fleshly, grave, double-chinned burgomasters in black, with black hats on 'em, riding together in what they call, I think, a double perambulator. My father is such fun here. He is always skipping about into the drawing-room, and speaking to all the girls, and telling them God knows what about us all. My mother and I are the old people who sit aloof, receive him as a sort of prodigal when he comes back to us, and listen indulgently to what he has to tell.

Llandudno, Thursday.—A cold bleak place of stucco villas with wide streets to let the wind in at you. A beautiful journey, however, coming hither.

Friday.—Seeley has taken my paper, which is, as I now think, not to beat about the bush, bad. However,

there are pretty things in it, I fancy; we shall see what you shall say.

Sunday.—I took my usual walk before turning in last night, and dallied over it a little. It was a cool, dark, solemn night, starry, but the sky charged with big black clouds. The lights in house windows you could see, but the houses themselves were lost in the general blackness. A church clock struck eleven as I went past, and rather startled me. The whiteness of the road was all I had to go by. I heard an express train roaring away down the coast into the night, and dying away sharply in the distance; it was like the noise of an enormous rocket, or a shot world, one would fancy. I suppose the darkness made me a little fanciful; but when at first I was puzzled by this great sound in the night, between sea and hills, I thought half seriously that it might be a world broken loose—this world to wit. I stood for I suppose five seconds with this looking-for of destruction in my head, not exactly frightened but put out; and I wanted badly not to be overwhelmed where I was, unless I could cry out a farewell with a great voice over the ruin and make myself heard.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

"John Knox" and "J. K." herein mentioned are the two papers on *John Knox and His Relations with Women*, first printed in Macmillan's Magazine and afterwards in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*.

Swanston, Wednesday [*Autumn*], 1874.

I HAVE been hard at work all yesterday, and besides had to write a long letter to Bob, so I found no time until quite late, and then was sleepy. Last night it blew a fearful gale; I was kept awake about a couple of hours, and could not get to sleep for the horror of the wind's noise; the whole house shook; and, mind you, our house *is* a

house, a great castle of jointed stone that would weigh up a street of English houses; so that when it quakes, as it did last night, it means something. But the quaking was not what put me about; it was the horrible howl of the wind round the corner; the audible haunting of an incarnate anger about the house; the evil spirit that was abroad; and, above all, the shuddering silent pauses when the storm's heart stands dreadfully still for a moment. O how I hate a storm at night! They have been a great influence in my life, I am sure; for I can remember them so far back—long before I was six at least, for we left the house in which I remember listening to them times without number when I was six. And in those days the storm had for me a perfect impersonation, as durable and unvarying as any heathen deity. I always heard it, as a horseman riding past with his cloak about his head, and somehow always carried away, and riding past again, and being baffled yet once more, *ad infinitum*, all night long. I think I wanted him to get past, but I am not sure; I know only that I had some interest either for or against in the matter; and I used to lie and hold my breath, not quite frightened, but in a state of miserable exaltation.

My first *John Knox* is in proof, and my second is on the anvil. It is very good of me so to do; for I want so much to get to my real tour and my sham tour, the real tour first; it is always working in my head, and if I can only turn on the right sort of style at the right moment, I am not much afraid of it. One thing bothers me; what with hammering at this J. K., and writing necessary letters, and taking necessary exercise (that even not enough, the weather is so repulsive to me, cold and windy), I find I have no time for reading except times of fatigue, when I wish merely to relax myself. O—and I read over again for this purpose Flaubert's *Tentation de St. Antoine;* it struck me a good deal at first, but this second time it has fetched me immensely. I am but just done with it, so you will know the large proportion of salt to take

with my present statement, that it's the finest thing I ever read! Of course, it isn't that, it's full of *longueurs*, and is not quite "redd up," as we say in Scotland, not quite articulated; but there are splendid things in it.

I say, *do* take your macaroni with oil: *do, please.* It's *beastly* with butter.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

Mr. (later Sir) George Grove was for some years before and after this date the editor of Macmillan's Magazine (but the true monument to his memory is of course his *Dictionary of Music*). After the Knox articles no more contributions from R. L. S. appeared in this magazine, partly, I think, because Mr. Alexander Macmillan disapproved of his essay on Burns published the following year. The Portfolio paper here mentioned is that entitled *On the Enjoyment of Unpleasant Places.*

[*Swanston, Autumn* 1874], *Thursday.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have another letter from Grove, about my *John Knox*, which is flattering in its way: he is a very gushing and spontaneous person. I am busy with another Portfolio paper for which I can find no name; I think I shall require to leave it without.

I am afraid I shall not get to London on my way to Poland, but I must try to manage it on my way back; I must see you anyway, before I tackle this sad winter work, just to get new heart. As it is, I am as jolly as three, in good health, fairish working trim and on good, very good, terms with my people.

Look here, I must have people well. If they will keep well, I am all right: if they won't—well I'll do as well as I can, and forgive them, and try to be something of a comfortable thought in spite. So with that cheerful sentiment, good-night dear friend and good health to you.

Saturday.—Your letter to-day. Thank you. It is a horrid day, outside. You talk of my setting to a book, as if I could; don't you know that things must *come* to

me? I can do but little; I mostly wait and look out. I am struggling with a Portfolio paper just now, which will not come straight somehow and *will* get too gushy; but a little patience will get it out of the kink and sober it down I hope. I have been thinking over my movements, and am not sure but that I may get to London on my way to Poland after all. Hurrah! But we must not halloo till we are out of the wood; this may be only a clearing.

God help us all, it is a funny world. To see people skipping all round us with their eyes sealed up with indifference, knowing nothing of the earth or man or woman, going automatically to offices and saying they are happy or unhappy out of a sense of duty, I suppose, surely at least from no sense of happiness or unhappiness, unless perhaps they have a tooth that twinges, is it not like a bad dream? Why don't they stamp their foot upon the ground and awake? There is the moon rising in the east, and there is a person with their heart broken and still glad and conscious of the world's glory up to the point of pain; and behold they know nothing of all this! I should like to kick them into consciousness, for damp gingerbread puppets as they are. S. C. is down on me for being bitter; who can help it sometimes, especially after they have slept ill?

I am going to have a lot of lunch presently; and then I shall feel all right again, and the loneliness will pass away as often before. It is the flesh that is weak. Already I have done myself all the good in the world by this scribble, and feel alive again and pretty jolly.

Sunday.—What a day! Cold and dark as mid-winter. I shall send with this two new photographs of myself for your opinion. My father regards this life "as a shambling sort of omnibus which is taking him to his hotel." Is that not well said? It came out in a rather pleasant and entirely amicable discussion which we had this afternoon on a walk. The colouring of the world, to-day is of course hideous; we saw only one pleasant sight, a couple

of lovers under a thorn-tree by the wayside, he with his arm about her waist: they did not seem to find it so cold as we. I have made a lot of progress to-day with my Portfolio paper. I think some of it should be nice, but it rambles a little; I like rambling, if the country be pleasant; don't you?—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*October* 27, 1874], *Edinburgh, Thursday.*

IT is cold, but very sunshiny and dry; I wish you were here; it would suit you and it doesn't suit me; if we could change? This is the Fast day—Thursday preceding bi-annual Holy Sacrament that is—nobody does any work, they go to Church twice, they read nothing secular (except the newspapers, that is the nuance between Fast day and Sunday), they eat like fighting-cocks. Behold how good a thing it is and becoming well to fast in Scotland. I am progressing with *John Knox and Women No.* 2; I shall finish it, I think, in a fortnight hence; and then I shall begin to enjoy myself. *J. K. and W. No.* 2 is not uninteresting however; it only bores me because I am so anxious to be at something else which I like better. I shall perhaps go to Church this afternoon from a sort of feeling that it is rather a wholesome thing to do of an afternoon; it keeps one from work and it lets you out so late that you cannot weary yourself walking and so spoil your evening's work.

Friday.—I got your letter this morning, and whether owing to that, or to the fact that I had spent the evening before in comparatively riotous living, I managed to work five hours and a half well and without fatigue; besides reading about an hour more at history. This is a thing to be proud of.

We have had lately some of the most beautiful sunsets; our autumn sunsets here are always admirable in

colour. To-night there was just a little lake of tarnished green deepening into a blood-orange at the margins, framed above by dark clouds and below by the long roof-line of the Egyptian buildings on what we call the Mound, the statues on the top (of her Britannic Majesty and diverse nondescript Sphinxes) printing themselves off black against the lit space.

Saturday.—It has been colder than ever; and to-night there is a truculent wind about the house, shaking the windows and making a hollow inarticulate grumbling in the chimney. I cannot say how much I hate the cold. It makes my scalp so tight across my head and gives me such a beastly rheumatism about my shoulders, and wrinkles and stiffens my face; O I have such a *Sehnsucht* for Mentone, where the sun is shining and the air still, and (a friend writes to me) people are complaining of the heat.

Sunday.—I was chased out by my lamp again last night; it always goes out when I feel in the humour to write to you. To-day I have been to Church, which has not improved my temper I must own. The clergyman did his best to make me hate him, and I took refuge in that admirable poem the Song of Deborah and Barak; I should like to make a long scroll of painting (say to go all round a cornice) illustrative of this poem; with the people seen in the distance going stealthily on footpaths while the great highways go vacant; with the archers besetting the draw-wells; with the princes in hiding on the hills among the bleating sheep-flocks; with the overthrow of Sisera, the stars fighting against him in their courses and that ancient river, the river Kishon, sweeping him away in anger; with his mother looking and looking down the long road in the red sunset, and never a banner and never a spear-clump coming into sight, and her women with white faces round her, ready with lying comfort. To say nothing of the people on white asses.

O, I do hate this damned life that I lead. Work—

work—work; that's all right, it's amusing; but I want women about me and I want pleasure. John Knox had a better time of it than I, with his godly females all leaving their husbands to follow after him; I would I were John Knox; I hate living like a hermit. Write me a nice letter if ever you are in the humour to write to me, and it doesn't hurt your head. Good-bye.—Ever your faithful friend, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

The projected visit to his Russian friend in Poland did not come off, and shortly after the preceding letter Stevenson went for a few days' walking tour in the Chiltern Hills of Buckinghamshire, as recorded in his essay *An Autumn Effect*. He then came on for a visit to London.

[*London, November* 1874.]

WHEN I left you I found an organ-grinder in Russell Square playing to a child; and the simple fact that there was a child listening to him, that he was giving this pleasure, entitled him, according to my theory, as you know, to some money; so I put some coppers on the ledge of his organ, without so much as looking at him, and I was going on when a woman said to me: "Yes, sir, he do look bad, don't he? scarcely fit like to be working." And then I looked at the man, and O! he was so ill, so yellow and heavy-eyed and drooping. I did not like to go back somehow, and so I gave the woman a shilling and asked her to give it to him for me. I saw her do so and walked on; but the face followed me, and so when I had got to the end of the division, I turned and came back as hard as I could and filled his hand with money—ten to thirteen shillings, I should think. I was sure he was going to be ill, you know, and he was a young man; and I dare say he was alone, and had no one to love him.

I had my reward; for a few yards farther on, here was another organ-grinder playing a dance tune, and perhaps

a dozen children all dancing merrily to his music, singly, and by twos and threes, and in pretty little figures together. Just what my organ-grinder in my story wanted to have happen to him! It was so gay and pleasant in the twilight under the street lamp.

I am very well, have eaten well, and am so sleepy I can write no more. This I write to let you know I am no worse; all the better.—Ever your faithful friend,

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Edinburgh, November* 1874], *Sunday.*

I was never more sorry to leave you, but I never left you with a better heart, than last night. I had a long journey and a cold one; but never was sick nor sorry the whole way. It was a long one because when we got to Berwick, we had to go round through the hills by Kelso, as there was a block on the main line. I knew nothing of this, and you may imagine my bewilderment when I came to myself, the train standing and whistling dismally in the black morning, before a little vacant half-lit station, with a name up that I had never heard before. My fellow-traveller woke up and wanted to know what was wrong. "O, it's nothing," I said, "nothing at all, it's an evil dream." However we had the thing explained to us at the end of ends, and trailed on in the dark among the snowy hills, stopping every now and again and whistling in an appealing kind of way, as much as to say, "God knows where we are, for God's sake don't run into us"; until at last we came to a dead standstill and remained so for perhaps an hour and a quarter. This wakened us up for a little; and we managed, at last, to attract the attention of one of the officials whom we could see picking their way about the snow with lanterns. This man (very wide awake, and hale, and lusty) informed us we were waiting for another conductor, as our own guard

did not know the line. "Where is the new guard coming from?" we ask. "O, close by; only—he, he—he was married last night." And immediately we heard much hoarse laughter in the dark about us; and the moving lanterns were shaken to and fro, as if in a wind. This poor conductor! However, I recomposed myself for slumber, and did not re-awake much before Edinburgh, where I was discharged three hours too late and found my father waiting for me in the snow, with a very long face.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO SIDNEY COLVIN

I forget what the Japanese prints were which I had been sending to Stevenson at his wish, but they sound like specimens of Hiroshigé and Kuniyoshi. The taste for these things was then quite new and had laid hold on him strongly.

[*Edinburgh, November* 1874.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Thank you, and God bless you for ever: this is a far better lot than the last; I have chosen four complete sets out of it for setting, quite admirable: the others are not quite one's taste; I find the colour far from always being agreeable, it is a great toss up. They have sent me duplicates of first a mad little scene with a white horse, a red monarch and a blue arm of the sea in it; and second of a night scene with water, flowers and a black and white umbrella and a wonderful grey distance and a wonderful general effect—one of my best in fact. Do not now force yourself to make any more purchases for me; but if ever you see a thing you would like to lecture off, remember I am the person who is ready to buy it and let you have the use of it: keep this in view *always*.

I am working very hard (for me) and am very happy over my picters.

Goodbye, *mon vieux*.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S.—In fact if ever you see anything exceptionally fine, purchase for R. L. S. I owe you lots of money besides this, don't I? *John Knox* is red and sparkling on the anvil and the hammer goes about six hours on him.

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

During his days in London Stevenson had gone with Mrs. Sitwell to revisit the Elgin marbles, and had carried off photographs of them to put up in his room at Edinburgh. *King Matthias's Hunting Horn* has perished like so many other stories of this time.

[*Edinburgh, November* 1874], *Tuesday.*

Well, I've got some women now, and they're better than nothing. Three, without heads, who have been away getting framed. And you know they are more to me, after a fashion, than they can be to you, because, after a fashion also, they are women. I have come now to think the sitting figure in spite of its beautiful drapery rather a blemish, rather an interruption to the sentiment. The two others are better than one has ever dreamed; I think these two women are the only things in the world that have been better than, in Bible phrase, it had entered into my heart to conceive. Who made them? Was it Pheidias? or do they not know? It is wonderful what company they are—noble company. And then I have now three Japanese pictures that are after my own heart, and I get up from time to time and turn a bit of favourite colour over and over, roll it under my tongue, savour it till it gets all through me; and then back to my chair and to work.

This afternoon about six there was a small orange moon, lost in a great world of blue evening. A few leafless boughs, and a bit of garden railing, criss-cross its face; and below it there was blueness and the spread lights of Leith, lost in blue haze. To the east, the town, also subdued to the same blue, piled itself up, with here and there a lit window, until it could print off its outline

against a faint patch of green and russet that remained behind the sunset.

I must tell you about my way of life, which is regular to a degree. Breakfast 8.30; during breakfast and my smoke afterwards till ten, when I begin work, I read Reformation; from ten, I work until about a quarter to one; from one until two, I lunch and read a book on Schopenhauer or one on Positivism; two to three work, three to six anything; if I am in before six, I read about Japan: six, dinner and a pipe with my father and coffee until 7.30; 7.30 to 9.30, work; after that either supper and a pipe at home, or out to Simpson's or Baxter's: bed between eleven and twelve.

Wednesday.—Two good things have arrived to me to-day: your letter for one, and the end of *John Knox* for another. I cannot write English because I have been speaking French all evening with some French people of my knowledge. It's a sad thing the state I get into, when I cannot remember English and yet do not know French! And it is worse when it is complicated, as at present, with a pen that will not write! If you knew how I have to paint and how I have to manœuvre to get the stuff legible at all.

Thursday.—I have said the Fates are only women after a fashion; and that is one of the strangest things about them. They are wonderfully womanly—they are more womanly than any woman—and those girt draperies are drawn over a wonderful greatness of body instinct with sex; I do not see a line in them that could be a line in a man. And yet, when all is said, they are not women for us; they are of another race, immortal, separate; one has no wish to look at them with love, only with a sort of lowly adoration, physical, but wanting what is the soul of all love, whether admitted to oneself or not, hope; in a word "the desire of the moth for the star." O great white stars of eternal marble, O shapely, colossal women, and yet not women. It is not love that

we seek from them, we do not desire to see their great eyes troubled with our passions, or the great impassive members contorted by any hope or pain or pleasure; only now and again, to be conscious that they exist, to have knowledge of them far off in cloudland or feel their steady eyes shining, like quiet watchful stars, above the turmoil of the earth.

I write so ill; so cheap and miserable and penny-a-linerish is this *John Knox* that I have just sent, that I am low. Only I keep my heart up by thinking of you. And if all goes to the worst, shall I not be able to lay my head on the great knees of the middle Fate—O these great knees—I know all Baudelaire meant now with his *géante*—to lay my head on her great knees and go to sleep.

Friday.—I have finished *The Story of King Matthias' Hunting Horn*, whereof I spoke to you, and I think it should be good. It excites me like wine, or fire, or death, or love, or something; nothing of my own writing ever excited me so much; it does seem to me so weird and fantastic.

Saturday.—I know now that there is a more subtle and dangerous sort of selfishness in habit than there ever can be in disorder. I never ceased to be generous when I was most *déréglé;* now when I am beginning to settle into habits, I see the danger in front of me—one might cease to be generous and grow hard and sordid in time and trouble. However, thank God it is life I want, and nothing posthumous, and for two good emotions I would sacrifice a thousand years of fame. Moreover I know so well that I shall never be much as a writer that I am not very sorely tempted.

My only chance is in my stories; and so you will forgive me if I postpone everything else to copy out *King Matthias;* I have learned by experience that a story should be copied out and finished fairly off at the first heat if ever. I am even thinking of finishing up half-

a-dozen perhaps and trying the publishers? what do you say? Give me your advice?

Sunday.—Good-bye. A long story to tell but no time to tell it: well and happy. Adieu.—Ever your faithful friend, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Sitwell

Edinburgh [*Sunday, November* 1874].

HERE is my long story: yesterday night, after having supped, I grew so restless that I was obliged to go out in search of some excitement. There was a half-moon lying over on its back, and incredibly bright in the midst of a faint grey sky set with faint stars: a very inartistic moon, that would have damned a picture.

At the most populous place of the city I found a little boy, three years old perhaps, half frantic with terror, and crying to every one for his "Mammy." This was about eleven, mark you. People stopped and spoke to him, and then went on, leaving him more frightened than before. But I and a good-humoured mechanic came up together; and I instantly developed a latent faculty for setting the hearts of children at rest. Master Tommy Murphy (such was his name) soon stopped crying, and allowed me to take him up and carry him; and the mechanic and I trudged away along Princes Street to find his parents. I was soon so tired that I had to ask the mechanic to carry the bairn; and you should have seen the puzzled contempt with which he looked at me, for knocking in so soon. He was a good fellow, however, although very impracticable and sentimental; and he soon bethought him that Master Murphy might catch cold after his excitement, so we wrapped him up in my greatcoat. "Tobauga (Tobago) Street" was the address he gave us; and we deposited him in a little grocer's shop and went through all the houses in the street without being able to find any one of the name of Murphy. Then I set off to the

head police office, leaving my greatcoat in pawn about Master Murphy's person. As I went down one of the lowest streets in the town, I saw a little bit of life that struck me. It was now half-past twelve, a little shop stood still half-open, and a boy of four or five years old was walking up and down before it imitating cockcrow. He was the only living creature within sight.

At the police offices no word of Master Murphy's parents; so I went back empty-handed. The good groceress, who had kept her shop open all this time, could keep the child no longer; her father, bad with bronchitis, said he must forth. So I got a large scone with currants in it, wrapped my coat about Tommy, got him up on my arm, and away to the police office with him: not very easy in my mind, for the poor child, young as he was—he could scarce speak—was full of terror for the "office," as he called it. He was now very grave and quiet and communicative with me; told me how his father thrashed him, and divers household matters. Whenever he saw a woman on our way he looked after her over my shoulder and then gave his judgment: "That's no *her*," adding sometimes, "She has a wean wi' her." Meantime I was telling him how I was going to take him to a gentleman who would find out his mother for him quicker than ever I could, and how he must not be afraid of him, but be brave, as he had been with me. We had just arrived at our destination—we were just under the lamp—when he looked me in the face and said appealingly, "He'll no put me in the office?" And I had to assure him that he would not, even as I pushed open the door and took him in.

The serjeant was very nice, and I got Tommy comfortably seated on a bench, and spirited him up with good words and the scone with the currants in it; and then, telling him I was just going out to look for Mammy, I got my greatcoat and slipped away.

Poor little boy! he was not called for, I learn, until ten this morning. This is very ill written, and I've missed

half that was picturesque in it; but to say truth, I am very tired and sleepy: it was two before I got to bed. However, you see, I had my excitement.

Monday.—I have written nothing all morning; I cannot settle to it. Yes—I *will* though.

10.45.—And I did. I want to say something more to you about the three women. I wonder so much why they should have been *women*, and halt between two opinions in the matter. Sometimes I think it is because they were made by a man for men; sometimes, again, I think there is an abstract reason for it, and there is something more substantive about a woman than ever there can be about a man. I can conceive a great mythical woman, living alone among inaccessible mountain-tops or in some lost island in the pagan seas, and ask no more. Whereas if I hear of a Hercules, I ask after Iole or Dejanira. I cannot think him a man without women. But I can think of these three deep-breasted women, living out all their days on remote hilltops, seeing the white dawn and the purple even, and the world outspread before them for ever, and no more to them for ever than a sight of the eyes, a hearing of the ears, a far-away interest of the inflexible heart, not pausing, not pitying, but austere with a holy austerity, rigid with a calm and passionless rigidity; and I find them none the less women to the end.

And think, if one could love a woman like that once, see her once grow pale with passion, and once wring your lips out upon hers, would it not be a small thing to die? Not that there is not a passion of a quite other sort, much less epic, far more dramatic and intimate, that comes out of the very frailty of perishable women; out of the lines of suffering that we see written about their eyes, and that we may wipe out if it were but for a moment; out of the thin hands, wrought and tempered in agony to a fineness of perception, that the indifferent or the merely happy cannot know; out of the tragedy that

lies about such a love, and the pathetic incompleteness. This is another thing, and perhaps it is a higher. I look over my shoulder at the three great headless Madonnas, and they look back at me and do not move; see me, and through and over me, the foul life of the city dying to its embers already as the night draws on; and over miles and miles of silent country, set here and there with lit towns, thundered through here and there with night expresses scattering fire and smoke; and away to the ends of the earth, and the furthest star, and the blank regions of nothing; and they are not moved. My quiet, great-kneed, deep-breasted, well-draped ladies of Necessity, I give my heart to you! R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Edinburgh*] *December* 23, 1874.

Monday.—I have come from a concert, and the concert was rather a disappointment. Not so my afternoon skating—Duddingston, our big loch, is bearing; and I wish you could have seen it this afternoon, covered with people, in thin driving snow flurries, the big hill grim and white and alpine overhead in the thick air, and the road up the gorge, as it were into the heart of it, dotted black with traffic. Moreover, I *can* skate a little bit; and what one can do is always pleasant to do.

Tuesday.—I got your letter to-day, and was so glad thereof. It was of good omen to me also. I worked from ten to one (my classes are suspended now for Xmas holidays), and wrote four or five Portfolio pages of my Buckinghamshire affair. Then I went to Duddingston and skated all afternoon. If you had seen the moon rising, a perfect sphere of smoky gold, in the dark air above the trees, and the white loch thick with skaters, and the great hill, snow-sprinkled, overhead! It was a sight for a king.

Wednesday.—I stayed on Duddingston to-day till after nightfall. The little booths that hucksters set up round the edge were marked each one by its little lamp. There were some fires too; and the light, and the shadows of the people who stood round them to warm themselves, made a strange pattern all round on the snow-covered ice. A few people with torches began to travel up and down the ice, a lit circle travelling along with them over the snow. A gigantic moon rose, meanwhile, over the trees and the kirk on the promontory among perturbed and vacillating clouds.

The walk home was very solemn and strange. Once, through a broken gorge, we had a glimpse of a little space of mackerel sky, moon-litten, on the other side of the hill; the broken ridges standing grey and spectral between; and the hilltop over all, snow-white, and strangely magnified in size.

This must go to you to-morrow, so that you may read it on Christmas Day for company. I hope it may be good company to you.

Thursday.—Outside, it snows thick and steadily. The gardens before our house are now a wonderful fairy forest. And O, this whiteness of things, how I love it, how it sends the blood about my body! Maurice de Guérin hated snow; what a fool he must have been! Somebody tried to put me out of conceit with it by saying that people were lost in it. As if people don't get lost in love, too, and die of devotion to art; as if everything worth were not an occasion to some people's end.

What a wintry letter this is! Only I think it is winter seen from the inside of a warm greatcoat. And there is, at least, a warm heart about it somewhere. Do you know, what they say in Xmas stories is true. I think one loves their friends more dearly at this season. —Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Sitwell

The Portfolio article here mentioned is *An Autumn Effect* (see *Essays of Travel*). The Italian story so delightedly begun was by and by condemned and destroyed like all the others of this time.

[*Edinburgh, January* 1875], *Monday.*

Have come from a concert. Sinico sang, *tant bien que mal*, "Ah perfido spergiuro!"; and then we had the Eroica symphony (No. 3). I can, and need, say no more; I am rapt out of earth by it; Beethoven is certainly the greatest man the world has yet produced. I wonder, is there anything so superb—I can find no word for it more specific than superb—all I know is that all my knowledge is transcended. I finished to-day and sent off (and a mighty mean detail it is, to set down after Beethoven's grand passion) my Portfolio article about Buckinghamshire. In its own way I believe it to be a good thing; and I hope you will find something in it to like; it touches, in a dry enough manner, upon most things under heaven, and if you like me, I think you ought to like this intellectual—no, I withdraw the word—this artistic dog of mine. Thaw—thaw—thaw, up here; and farewell skating, and farewell the clear dry air and the wide, bright, white snow-surface, and all that was so pleasant in the past.

Wednesday.—Yesterday I wasn't well and to-night I have been ever so busy. There came a note from the Academy, sent by John H. Ingram, the editor of the edition of Poe's works I have been reviewing, challenging me to find any more faults. I have found nearly sixty; so I may be happy; but that makes me none the less sleepy; so I must go to bed.

Friday.—I am awfully out of the humour to write; I am very inert although quite happy; I am informed by those who are more expert that I am bilious. *Bien;* let it be so; I am still content; and though I can do no original work, I get forward making notes for my Knox at a good trot.

Saturday.—I am so happy. I am no longer here in Edinburgh. I have been all yesterday evening and this forenoon in Italy, four hundred years ago, with one Sannazzaro, a sculptor, painter, poet, etc., and one Ippolita, a beautiful Duchess. O I like it badly! I wish you could hear it at once; or rather I wish you could see it immediately in beautiful type on such a page as it ought to be, in my first little volume of stories. What a change this is from collecting dull notes for *John Knox*, as I have been all the early part of the week —the difference between life and death.—I am quite well again and in such happy spirits, as who would not be, having spent so much of his time at that convent on the hills with these sweet people. *Vous verrez*, and if you don't like this story—well, I give it up if you don't like it. Not but what there's a long way to travel yet; I am no farther than the threshold; I have only set the men, and the game has still to be played, and a lot of dim notions must become definite and shapely, and a deal be clear to me that is anything but clear as yet. The story shall be called, I think, *When the Devil was well*, in allusion to the old proverb.

Good-bye. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO SIDNEY COLVIN

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh* [*January* 1875].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I have worked too hard; I have given myself one day of rest, and that was not enough; so I am giving myself another. I shall go to bed again likewise so soon as this is done, and slumber most potently.

9 P.M.—Slept all afternoon like a lamb.

About my coming south, I think the still small unanswerable voice of coins will make it impossible until the session is over (end of March); but for all that, I think I shall hold out jolly. I do not want you to come and bother yourself; indeed, it is still not quite certain

whether my father will be quite fit for you, although I have now no fear of that really. Now don't take up this wrongly; I wish you could come; and I do not know anything that would make me happier, but I see that it is wrong to expect it, and so I resign myself: some time after. I offered Appleton a series of papers on the modern French school—the Parnassiens, I think they call them—de Banville, Coppée, Soulary, and Sully Prudhomme. But he has not deigned to answer my letter.

I shall have another Portfolio paper so soon as I am done with this story, that has played me out; the story is to be called *When the Devil was well:* scene, Italy, Renaissance; colour, purely imaginary of course, my own unregenerate idea of what Italy then was. O, when shall I find the story of my dreams, that shall never halt nor wander nor step aside, but go ever before its face, and ever swifter and louder, until the pit receives it, roaring? The Portfolio paper will be about Scotland and England.—Ever yours, R. L. Stevenson.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Edinburgh, January* 1875.]

I wish I could write better letters to you. Mine must be very dull. I must try to give you news. Well, I was at the annual dinner of my old Academy schoolfellows last night. We sat down ten, out of seventy-two! The others are scattered all over the places of the earth, some in San Francisco, some in New Zealand, some in India, one in the backwoods—it gave one a wide look over the world to hear them talk so. I read them some verses. It is great fun; I always read verses, and in the vinous enthusiasm of the moment they always propose to have them printed; *Ce qui n'arrive jamais du reste:* in the morning, they are more calm.

Sunday.—It occurs to me that one reason why there is

no news in my letters is because there is so little in my life. I always tell you of my concerts: I was at another yesterday afternoon: a recital of Hallé and Norman Neruda. I went in the evening to the pantomime with the Mackintoshes—cousins of mine. Their little boy, aged four, was there for the first time. To see him with his eyes fixed and open like saucers, and never varying his expression save in so far as he might sometimes open his mouth a little wider, was worth the money. He laughed only once—when the giant's dwarf fed his master as though he were a child. Coming home, he was much interested as to who made the fairies, and wanted to know if they were like *berries*. I should like to know how much this question was due to the idea of their coming up from under the stage, and how much to a vague idea of rhyme. When he was told that they were not like berries, he then asked if they had not been flowers before they were fairies. It was a good deal in the vein of Herbert Spencer's primitive man all this.

I am pretty well but have not got back to work much since Tuesday. I work far too hard at the story; but I wish I had finished it before I stopped as I feel somewhat out of the swing now.—Ever your faithful

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

Another of the literary projects which came to naught, no one of the stories mentioned having turned out according to Stevenson's dream and desire at its first conception, or even having been preserved for use afterwards as the foundation of riper work. "Clytie" is of course the famous Roman bust from the Townley collection in the British Museum.

[*Edinburgh, January* 1875.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Thanks for your letter, I too am in such a state of business that I know not when to find the time to write. Look here—Seeley does not seem to me to have put that paper of mine in this month; so I

remain unable to pay you; which is a sad pity and must be forgiven me.

What am I doing? Well I wrote my second *John Knox*, which is not a bad piece of work for me; begun and finished ready for press in nine days. Then I have since written a story called *King Matthias's Hunting Horn*, and I am engaged in finishing another called *The Two Falconers of Cairnstane*. I find my stories affect me rather more perhaps than is wholesome. I have only been two hours at work to-day, and yet I have been crying and am shaking badly, as you can see in my handwriting, and my back is a bit bad. They give me pleasure though, quite worth all results. However I shall work no more to-day.

I am to get £1000 when I pass Advocate, it seems; which is good.

O I say, will you kindly tell me all about the bust of Clytie.

Then I had the wisdom to stop and look over Japanese picture books until lunch time.

Well, tell me all about Clytie, how old is it, who did it, what's it about, etc. Send it on a sheet that I can forward without indiscretion to another, as I desire the information for a friend whom I wish to please.

Now, look here. When I have twelve stories ready—these twelve—

All Scotch.

I. The Devil on Cramond Sands (needs copying about half).
II. The Curate of Anstruther's Bottle (needs copying altogether).
III. The Two Falconers of Cairnstane (wants a few pages).
IV. Strange Adventures of Mr. Nehemiah Solny (wants reorganisation).
V. King Matthias's Hunting Horn (all ready).
VI. Autolycus at Court (in gremio).
VII. The Family of Love (in gremio).

VIII. The Barrel Organ (all ready).
IX. The Last Sinner (wants copying).
X. Margery Bonthron (wants a few pages).
XI. Martin's Madonna (in gremio).
XII. Life and Death (all ready).

—when I have these twelve ready, should I not do better to try to get a publisher for them, call them *A Book of Stories* and put a good dedicatory letter at the fore end of them. I should get less coin than by going into magazines perhaps; but I should also get more notice, should I not? and so, do better for myself in the long run. Now, should I not? Besides a book with boards is a book with boards, even if it bain't a very fat one and has no references to Ammianus Marcellinus and German critics at the foot of the pages. On all this, I shall want your serious advice. I am sure I shall stand or fall by the stories; and you'll think so too, when you see those poor excrescences the two John Knox and Women games. However, judge for yourself and be prudent on my behalf, like a good soul.

Yes, I'll come to Cambridge then or thereabout, if God doesn't put a real tangible spoke in my wheel.

My terms with my parents are admirable; we are a very united family.

Good-bye, *mon cher, je ne puis plus écrire.* I have not quite got over a damned affecting part in my story this morning. O cussed stories, they will never affect any one but me I fear.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Sitwell

In the following is related Stevenson's first introduction to Mr. W. E. Henley. The acquaintance thus formed ripened quickly, as is well known, into a close and stimulating friendship. Of the story called *A Country Dance* no trace remains.

Edinburgh, Tuesday [*February* 1875].

I GOT your nice long gossiping letter to-day—I mean by that that there was more news in it than usual—and

so, of course, I am pretty jolly. I am in the house, however, with such a beastly cold in the head. Our east winds begin already to be very cold.

O, I have such a longing for children of my own; and yet I do not think I could bear it if I had one. I fancy I must feel more like a woman than like a man about that. I sometimes hate the children I see on the street —you know what I mean by hate—wish they were somewhere else, and not there to mock me; and sometimes, again, I don't know how to go by them for the love of them, especially the very wee ones.

Thursday.—I have been still in the house since I wrote, and I *have* worked. I finished the Italian story; not well, but as well as I can just now; I must go all over it again, some time soon, when I feel in the humour to better and perfect it. And now I have taken up an old story, begun years ago; and I have now re-written all I had written of it then, and mean to finish it. What I have lost and gained is odd. As far as regards simple writing, of course, I am in another world now; but in some things, though more clumsy, I seem to have been freer and more plucky: this is a lesson I have taken to heart. I have got a jolly new name for my old story. I am going to call it *A Country Dance;* the two heroes keep changing places, you know; and the chapter where the most of this changing goes on is to be called "Up the middle, down the middle." It will be in six or (perhaps) seven chapters. I have never worked harder in my life than these last four days. If I can only keep it up.

Saturday.—Yesterday, Leslie Stephen, who was down here to lecture, called on me and took me up to see a poor fellow, a sort of poet who writes for him, and who has been eighteen months in our infirmary, and may be, for all I know, eighteen months more. It was very sad to see him there, in a little room with two beds, and a couple of sick children in the other bed; a girl came in to visit the children, and played dominoes on

the counterpane with them; the gas flared and crackled, the fire burned in a dull economical way; Stephen and I sat on a couple of chairs, and the poor fellow sat up in his bed with his hair and beard all tangled, and talked as cheerfully as if he had been in a King's palace, or the great King's palace of the blue air. He has taught himself two languages since he has been lying there. I shall try to be of use to him.

We have had two beautiful spring days, mild as milk, windy withal, and the sun hot. I dreamed last night I was walking by moonlight round the place where the scene of my story is laid; it was all so quiet and sweet, and the blackbirds were singing as if it was day; it made my heart very cool and happy.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Edinburgh*] *February* 8, 1875.

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Forgive my bothering you. Here is the proof of my second *Knox*. Glance it over, like a good fellow, and if there's anything very flagrant send it to me marked. I have no confidence in myself; I feel such an ass. What have I been doing? As near as I can calculate, nothing. And yet I have worked all this month from three to five hours a day, that is to say, from one to three hours more than my doctor allows me; positively no result.

No, I can write no article just now; I am *pioching*, like a madman, at my stories, and can make nothing of them; my simplicity is tame and dull—my passion tinsel, boyish, hysterical. Never mind—ten years hence, if I live, I shall have learned, so help me God. I know one must work, in the meantime (so says Balzac) *comme le mineur enfoui sous un éboulement.*

J'y parviendrai, nom de nom de nom! But it's a long look forward.—Ever yours, R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

As the spring advanced Stevenson had again been much out of sorts, and had gone for a change, in the company of Mr. R. A. M. Stevenson, on his first visit to the artist haunts of Fontainebleau which were afterwards so much endeared to him.

[*Barbizon, April* 1875.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,—This is just a line to say I am well and happy. I am here in my dear forest all day in the open air. It is very be—no, not beautiful exactly, just now, but very bright and living. There are one or two song birds and a cuckoo; all the fruit-trees are in flower, and the beeches make sunshine in a shady place. I begin to go all right; you need not be vexed about my health; I really was ill at first, as bad as I have been for nearly a year; but the forest begins to work, and the air, and the sun, and the smell of the pines. If I could stay a month here, I should be as right as possible. Thanks for your letter.—Your faithful R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Swanston, Tuesday, April* 1875.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been so busy, away to Bridge of Allan with my father first, and then with Simpson and Baxter out here from Saturday till Monday. I had no time to write, and, as it is, am strangely incapable. Thanks for your letter. I have been reading such lots of law, and it seems to take away the power of writing from me. From morning to night, so often as I have a spare moment, I am in the embrace of a law book—barren embraces. I am in good spirits; and my heart smites me as usual, when I am in good spirits, about my parents. If I get a bit dull, I am away to London without a scruple; but so long as my heart keeps up, I am all for my parents.

What do you think of Henley's hospital verses? [1] They were to have been dedicated to me, but Stephen wouldn't allow it—said it would be pretentious.

Wednesday.—I meant to have made this quite a decent letter this morning, but listen. I had pain all last night, and did not sleep well, and now am cold and sickish, and strung up ever and again with another flash of pain. Will you remember me to everybody? My principal characteristics are cold, poverty, and Scots Law—three very bad things. Oo, how the rain falls! The mist is quite low on the hill. The birds are twittering to each other about the indifferent season. O, here's a gem for you. An old godly woman predicted the end of the world, because the seasons were becoming indistinguishable; my cousin Dora objected that last winter had been pretty well marked. "Yes, my dear," replied the soothsayeress; "but I think you'll find the summer will be rather co-amplicated."—Ever your faithful R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

The rehearsals were those of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* for amateur theatricals at Professor Fleeming Jenkin's, in which Stevenson played the part of Orsino.

[*Edinburgh, April* 1875] *Saturday.*

I AM getting on with my rehearsals, but I find the part very hard. I rehearsed yesterday from a quarter to seven, and to-day from four (with interval for dinner) to eleven. You see the sad strait I am in for ink.—*À demain.*

Sunday.—This is the third ink-bottle I have tried, and still it's nothing to boast of. My journey went off all right, and I have kept ever in good spirits. Last night, indeed, I did think my little bit of gaiety was going away down the wind like a whiff of tobacco smoke, but to-day it has come back to me a little. The influence of this place is assuredly all that can be worst against

[1] Printed by Mr. Leslie Stephen in the Cornhill.

one; *mais il faut lutter.* I was haunted last night when I was in bed by the most cold, desolate recollections of my past life here; I was glad to try and think of the forest, and warm my hands at the thought of it. O the quiet, grey thickets, and the yellow butterflies, and the woodpeckers, and the outlook over the plain as it were over a sea! O for the good, fleshly stupidity of the woods, the body conscious of itself all over and the mind forgotten, the clean air nestling next your skin as though your clothes were gossamer, the eye filled and content, the whole MAN HAPPY! Whereas here it takes a pull to hold yourself together; it needs both hands, and a book of stoical maxims, and a sort of bitterness at the heart by way of armour.—Ever your faithful R. L. S.

Wednesday.—I am so played out with a cold in my eye that I cannot see to write or read without difficulty. It is swollen *horrible;* so how I shall look as Orsino, God knows! I have my fine clothes tho'. Henley's sonnets have been taken for the Cornhill. He is out of hospital now, and dressed, but still not too much to brag of in health, poor fellow, I am afraid.

Sunday.—So. I have still rather bad eyes, and a nasty sore throat. I play Orsino every day, in all the pomp of Solomon, splendid Francis the First clothes, heavy with gold and stage jewellery. I play it ill enough, I believe; but me and the clothes, and the wedding wherewith the clothes and me are reconciled, produce every night a thrill of admiration. Our cook told my mother (there is a servants' night, you know) that she and the housemaid were "just prood to be able to say it was oor young gentleman." To sup afterwards with these clothes on, and a wonderful lot of gaiety and Shakespearean jokes about the table, is something to live for. It is so nice to feel you have been dead three hundred years, and the sound of your laughter is faint and far off in the centuries.—Ever your faithful

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Edinburgh, April* 1875.]

Wednesday.—A moment at last. These last few days have been as jolly as days could be, and by good fortune I leave to-morrow for Swanston, so that I shall not feel the whole fall back to habitual self. The pride of life could scarce go further. To live in splendid clothes, velvet and gold and fur, upon principally champagne and lobster salad, with a company of people nearly all of whom are exceptionally good talkers; when your days began about eleven and ended about four—I have lost that sentence; I give it up; it is very admirable sport, any way. Then both my afternoons have been so pleasantly occupied—taking Henley drives. I had a business to carry him down the long stair, and more of a business to get him up again, but while he was in the carriage it was splendid. It is now just the top of spring with us. The whole country is mad with green. To see the cherry-blossom bitten out upon the black firs, and the black firs bitten out of the blue sky, was a sight to set before a king. You may imagine what it was to a man who has been eighteen months in an hospital ward. The look of his face was a wine to me. He plainly has been little in the country before. Imagine this: I always stopped him on the Bridges to let him enjoy the great *cry* of green that goes up to Heaven out of the river beds, and he asked (more than once) "What noise is that?"—"The water."—"O!" almost incredulously; and then quite a long while after: "Do you know the noise of the water astonished me very much?" I was much struck by his putting the question *twice;* I have lost the sense of wonder of course; but there must be something to wonder at, for Henley has eyes and ears and an immortal soul of his own.

I shall send this off to-day to let you know of my new

address—Swanston Cottage, Lothianburn, Edinburgh. Salute the faithful in my name. Salute Priscilla, salute Barnabas, salute Ebenezer—O no, he's too much, I withdraw Ebenezer; enough of early Christians.—Ever your faithful ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Edinburgh, May or June* 1875.]

I SAY, we have a splendid picture here in Edinburgh. A Ruysdael of which one can never tire: I think it is one of the best landscapes in the world: a grey still day, a grey still river, a rough oak wood on one shore, on the other chalky banks with very complicated footpaths, oak woods, a field where a man stands reaping, church towers relieved against the sky and a beautiful distance, neither blue nor green. It is so still, the light is so cool and temperate, the river woos you to bathe in it. O I like it!

I say, I wonder if our Scottish Academy's exhibition is going to be done at all for Appleton or whether he does not care for it. It might amuse me, although I am not fit for it. Why and O why doesn't Grove publish me?—Ever yours, R. L. STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

I was at this time, if I remember rightly, preparing some lectures on Hogarth for a course at Cambridge.

[*Swanston, June* 1875.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I am a devil certainly; but write I cannot. Look here, you had better get hold of G. C. Lichtenberg's *Ausfürliche Erklarung der Hogarthischen Kupferstiche:* Göttingen, 1794 to 1816 (it was published in numbers seemingly). Douglas the publisher lent it to me: and tho' I hate the damned tongue too cordially to do more than dip into it, I have seen some shrewd things.

If you cannot get it for yourself, (it seems scarce), I dare say I could negotiate with Douglas for a loan. This adorable spring has made me quite drunken, drunken with green colour and golden sound. We have the best blackbird here that we have had for years; we have two; but the other is but an average performer. Anything so rich and clear as the pipe of our first fiddle, it never entered into the heart of man to fancy. How the years slip away, Colvin; and we walk little cycles, and turn in little abortive spirals, and come out again, hot and weary, to find the same view before us, the same hill barring the road. Only, bless God for it, we have still the same eye to see with, and if the scene be not altogether unsightly, we can enjoy it whether or no. I feel quite happy, but curiously inert and passive, something for the winds to blow over, and the sun to glimpse on and go off again, as it might be a tree or a gravestone. All this willing and wishing and striving leads a man nowhere after all. Here I am back again in my old humour of a sunny equanimity; to see the world fleet about me; and the days chase each other like sun patches, and the nights like cloud-shadows, on a windy day; content to see them go and no wise reluctant for the cool evening, with its dew and stars and fading strain of tragic red. And I ask myself why I ever leave this humour? What I have gained? And the winds blow in the trees with a sustained "Pish"! and the birds answer me in a long derisive whistle.

So that for health, happiness, and indifferent literature, apply to—Ever yours, R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

"*Burns*" means the article on Burns which R. L. S. had been commissioned to write for the Encyclopædia Britannica. The "awfully nice man" was the Hon. J. Seed, formerly Secretary to the Customs and Marine Department of New Zealand; and it was from his conversation that the notion of the Samoan Islands as a

place of refuge for the sick and world-worn first entered Stevenson's mind, to lie dormant (I never heard him speak of it) and be revived thirteen years later.

[*Edinburgh, June* 1875.]

Simply a scratch. All right, jolly, well, and through with the difficulty. My father pleased about the *Burns*. Never travel in the same carriage with three able-bodied seamen and a fruiterer from Kent; the A.-B.'s speak all night as though they were hailing vessels at sea; and the fruiterer as if he were crying fruit in a noisy market-place—such, at least, is my *funeste* experience. I wonder if a fruiterer from some place else—say Worcestershire—would offer the same phenomena? insoluble doubt.

R. L. S.

Later.—Forgive me, couldn't get it off. Awfully nice man here to-night. Public servant—New Zealand. Telling us all about the South Sea Islands till I was sick with desire to go there: beautiful places, green for ever; perfect climate; perfect shapes of men and women, with red flowers in their hair; and nothing to do but to study oratory and etiquette, sit in the sun, and pick up the fruits as they fall. Navigator's Island is the place; absolute balm for the weary.—Ever your faithful friend,

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

The examination for the Bar at Edinburgh was approaching. *Fontainebleau* is the paper called *Forest Notes*, afterwards printed in the Cornhill Magazine. The church is Glencorse Church in the Pentlands, to the thoughts of which Stevenson reverted in his last days with so much emotion (see *Weir of Hermiston*, chap. v.).

[*Swanston. End of June* 1875.]

Thursday.—This day fortnight I shall fall or conquer. Outside the rain still soaks; but now and again the hill-top looks through the mist vaguely. I am very comfortable, very sleepy, and very much satisfied with the arrangements of Providence.

Saturday—no, Sunday, 12.45.—Just been—not grinding, alas!—I couldn't—but doing a bit of *Fontainebleau*. I don't think I'll be plucked. I am not sure though—I am so busy, what with this d—d law, and this *Fontainebleau* always at my elbow, and three plays (three, think of that!) and a story, all crying out to me, "Finish, finish, make an entire end, make us strong, shapely, viable creatures!" It's enough to put a man crazy. Moreover, I have my thesis given out now, which is a fifth (is it fifth? I can't count) incumbrance.

Sunday.—I've been to church, and am not depressed—a great step. I was at that beautiful church my *petit poëme en prose* was about. It is a little cruciform place, with heavy cornices and string course to match, and a steep slate roof. The small kirkyard is full of old gravestones. One of a Frenchman from Dunkerque—I suppose he died prisoner in the military prison hard by—and one, the most pathetic memorial I ever saw, a poor schoolslate, in a wooden frame, with the inscription cut into it evidently by the father's own hand. In church, old Mr. Torrence preached—over eighty, and a relic of times forgotten, with his black thread gloves and mild old foolish face. One of the nicest parts of it was to see John Inglis, the greatest man in Scotland, our Justice-General, and the only born lawyer I ever heard, listening to the piping old body, as though it had all been a revelation, grave and respectful.—Ever your faithful R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Edinburgh, July* 15, 1875.]

Passed.

Ever your
R.
L.
S.

IV

ADVOCATE AND AUTHOR

EDINBURGH—PARIS—FONTAINEBLEAU

JULY 1875–JULY 1879

HAVING on the 14th of July 1875 passed with credit his examination for the Bar at Edinburgh, Stevenson thenceforth enjoyed whatever status and consideration attaches to the title of Advocate. But he made no serious attempt to practise, and by the 25th of the same month had started with Sir Walter Simpson for France. Here he lived and tramped for several weeks among the artist haunts of Fontainebleau and the neighbourhood, occupying himself chiefly with studies of the French poets and poetry of the fifteenth century, which afterwards bore fruit in his papers on Charles of Orleans and François Villon. Thence he travelled to join his parents at Wiesbaden and Homburg. Returning in the autumn to Scotland, he made, to please them, an effort to live the ordinary life of an Edinburgh advocate—attending trials and spending his mornings in wig and gown at the Parliament House. But this attempt was before long abandoned as tending to waste of time and being incompatible with his real occupation of literature. Through the next winter and spring he remained in Edinburgh, except for a short winter walking tour in Ayrshire and Galloway, and a month spent among his friends in London. In the late summer of 1876, after a

visit to the West Highlands, he made the canoe trip with Sir Walter Simpson which furnished the subject of the *Inland Voyage*, followed by a prolonged autumn stay at Grez and Barbizon. The life, atmosphere, and scenery of these forest haunts had charmed and soothed him, as we have seen, since he was first introduced to them by his cousin, Mr. R. A. M. Stevenson, in the spring of 1875. An unfettered, unconventional, open-air existence, passed face to face with nature and in the company of congenial people engaged, like himself, in grappling with the problems and difficulties of an art, had been what he had longed for most consistently through all the agitations of his youth. And now he had found just such an existence, and with it, as he thought, peace of mind, health, and the spirit of unimpeded work.

But peace of mind was not to be his for long. What indeed awaited him in the forest was something different and more momentous: it was his fate: the romance which decided his life, and the companion whom he resolved to make his own at all hazards. But of this hereafter. To continue briefly the annals of the time: the year 1877 was again spent between Edinburgh, London, the Fontainebleau region, and several different temporary abodes in the artists' and other quarters of Paris; with an excursion in the company of his parents to the Land's End in August. In 1878 a similar general mode of life was varied by a visit with his parents in March to Burford Bridge, where he made warm friends with a senior to whom he had long looked up from a distance, Mr. George Meredith; by a spell of secretarial work under Professor Fleeming Jenkin, who was serving as a juror on the Paris Exhibition; and lastly, by the autumn tramp through the Cévennes, afterwards recounted with

so much charm in *Travels with a Donkey*. The first half of 1879 was again spent between London, Scotland, and France.

During these four years, it should be added, Stevenson's health was very passable. It often, indeed, threatened to give way after any prolonged residence in Edinburgh, but was generally soon restored by open-air excursions (during which he was capable of fairly vigorous and sustained daily exercise), or by a spell of life among the woods of Fontainebleau. They were also the years in which he settled for good into his chosen profession of letters. He worked rather desultorily for the first twelve months after his call to the Bar, but afterwards with ever-growing industry and success, winning from the critical a full measure of recognition, though relatively little, so far, from the general public. In 1875 and 1876 he contributed as a journalist, though not frequently, to the Academy and Vanity Fair, and in 1877 more abundantly to London, a weekly review founded by Mr. Glasgow Brown, an acquaintance of Edinburgh Speculative days, and carried on, after the failure of that gentleman's health, by Mr. Henley. But he had no great gift or liking for journalism, or for any work not calling for the best literary form and finish he could give. Where he found special scope for such work was in the Cornhill Magazine under the editorship of Mr. Leslie Stephen. Here he continued his critical papers on men and books, already begun in 1874 with *Victor Hugo*, and began in 1876 the series of papers afterwards collected in *Virginibus Puerisque*. They were continued in 1877, and in greater number throughout 1878. His first published stories appeared as follows :— *A Lodging for the Night*, Temple Bar, October 1877 ; *The Sire de Malétroit's Door*, Temple Bar, January 1878 ; and

Will o' the Mill, Cornhill Magazine, January 1878. In May 1878 followed his first travel book, *The Inland Voyage*, containing the account of his canoe trip from Antwerp to Grez. This was to Stevenson a year of great and various productiveness. Besides six or eight characteristic essays of the *Virginibus Puerisque* series, there appeared in London the set of fantastic modern tales called the *New Arabian Nights*, conceived and written in an entirely different key from any of his previous work, as well as the kindly, sentimental comedy of French artist life, *Providence and the Guitar;* and in the Portfolio the *Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh*, republished at the end of the year in book form. During the autumn and winter of this year he wrote *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*, and was much and eagerly engaged in the planning of plays in collaboration with Mr. Henley; of which one, *Deacon Brodie*, was finished in the spring of 1879. In the same spring he drafted in Edinburgh, but afterwards laid by, four chapters on ethics, a study of which he once spoke as being always his "veiled mistress," under the name of *Lay Morals*.

But abounding in good work as this period was, and momentous as it was in regard to Stevenson's future life, it is a period which figures but meagrely in his correspondence, and in this book must fill disproportionately little space. Without the least breach of friendship, or even of intimate confidence on occasion, Stevenson had begun, as was natural and necessary, to wean himself from his entire dependence on his friend and counsellor of the last two years; to take his life more into his own hands; and to intermit the regularity of his correspondence with her. A few new correspondents appear; but to none of us in these days did he write more than scantily. Partly

his growing absorption by the complications of his life and the interests of his work left him little time or inclination for letter-writing; partly his greater freedom of movement made it unnecessary. On his way backwards and forwards between Scotland and France, his friends in London had the chance of seeing him much more frequently than of yore. He avoided formal and dress-coated society; but in the company of congenial friends, whether men or women, and in places like the Savile Club (his favourite haunt), he was as brilliant and stimulating as ever, and however acute his inward preoccupations, his visits were always a delight.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Edinburgh, end of July* 1875.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Herewith you receive the rest of Henley's hospital work. He was much pleased by what you said of him, and asked me to forward these to you for your opinion. One poem, the *Spring Sorrow*, seems to me the most beautiful. I thank God for this *petit bout de consolation*, that by Henley's own account, this one more lovely thing in the world is not altogether without some trace of my influence: let me say that I have been something sympathetic which the mother found and contemplated while she yet carried it in her womb. This, in my profound discouragement, is a great thing for me; if I cannot do good with myself, at least, it seems, I can help others better inspired; I am at least a skilful accoucheur. My discouragement is from many causes: among others the re-reading of my Italian story. Forgive me, Colvin, but I cannot agree with you; it seems green fruit to me, if not really unwholesome; it is profoundly feeble, damn its weakness! Moreover I stick over my *Fontainebleau*, it presents difficulties to me that I surmount slowly.

I am very busy with Béranger for the Britannica. Shall be up in town on Friday or Saturday.—Ever yours,

R. L. S., *Advocate.*

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

[*Chez Siron, Barbizon, Seine et Marne, August* 1875.]

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I have been three days at a place called Grez, a pretty and very melancholy village on the plain. A low bridge of many arches choked with sedge; great fields of white and yellow water-lilies; poplars and willows innumerable; and about it all such an atmosphere of sadness and slackness, one could do nothing but get into the boat and out of it again, and yawn for bedtime.

Yesterday Bob and I walked home; it came on a very creditable thunderstorm; we were soon wet through; sometimes the rain was so heavy that one could only see by holding the hand over the eyes; and to crown all, we lost our way and wandered all over the place, and into the artillery range, among broken trees, with big shot lying about among the rocks. It was near dinner-time when we got to Barbizon; and it is supposed that we walked from twenty-three to twenty-five miles, which is not bad for the Advocate, who is not tired this morning. I was very glad to be back again in this dear place, and smell the wet forest in the morning.

Simpson and the rest drove back in a carriage, and got about as wet as we did.

Why don't you write? I have no more to say.—Ever your affectionate son, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Sitwell

At this time Stevenson was much occupied, as were several young writers his contemporaries, with imitating the artificial

forms of early French verse. Only one of his attempts, I believe, has been preserved, besides the two contained in this letter. The second is a variation on a theme of Banville's.

Château Renard, Loiret, August 1875.

I HAVE been walking these last days from place to place; and it does make it hot for walking with a sack in this weather. I am burned in horrid patches of red; my nose, I fear, is going to take the lead in colour; Simpson is all flushed, as if he were seen by a sunset. I send you here two rondeaux; I don't suppose they will amuse anybody but me; but this measure, short and yet intricate, is just what I desire; and I have had some good times walking along the glaring roads, or down the poplar alley of the great canal, pitting my own humour to this old verse.

Far have you come, my lady, from the town,
And far from all your sorrows, if you please,
To smell the good sea-winds and hear the seas,
And in green meadows lay your body down.

To find your pale face grow from pale to brown,
Your sad eyes growing brighter by degrees;
Far have you come, my lady, from the town,
And far from all your sorrows, if you please.

Here in this seaboard land of old renown,
In meadow grass go wading to the knees;
Bathe your whole soul a while in simple ease;
There is no sorrow but the sea can drown;
Far have you come, my lady, from the town.

Nous n'irons plus au bois

We'll walk the woods no more,
But stay beside the fire,
To weep for old desire
And things that are no more.

The woods are spoiled and hoar,
The ways are full of mire;
We'll walk the woods no more,
But stay beside the fire.
We loved, in days of yore,
Love, laughter, and the lyre.
Ah God, but death is dire,
And death is at the door—
We'll walk the woods no more.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

The special mood or occasion of unaccustomed bitterness which prompted this rhapsody has passed from memory beyond recall. The date must be after his return from his second excursion to Fontainebleau.

[*Swanston, late Summer* 1875] *Thursday.*

I HAVE been staying in town, and could not write a word. It is a fine strong night, full of wind; the trees are all crying out in the darkness; funny to think of the birds asleep outside, on the tossing branches, the little bright eyes closed, the brave wings folded, the little hearts that beat so hard and thick (so much harder and thicker than ever human heart) all stilled and quieted in deep slumber, in the midst of this noise and turmoil. Why, it will be as much as I can do to sleep in here in my walled room; so loud and jolly the wind sounds through the open window. The unknown places of the night invite the travelling fancy; I like to think of the sleeping towns and sleeping farm-houses and cottages, all the world over, here by the white road poplar-lined, there by the clamorous surf. Isn't that a good dormitive?

Saturday.—I cannot tell how I feel, who can ever? I feel like a person in a novel of George Sand's; I feel I desire to go out of the house, and begin life anew in the cool blue night; never to come back here; never, never. Only to go on for ever by sunny day and grey day, by

bright night and foul, by high-way and by-way, town and hamlet, until somewhere by a road-side or in some clean inn clean death opened his arms to me and took me to his quiet heart for ever. If soon, good; if late, well then, late—there would be many a long bright mile behind me, many a goodly, many a serious sight; I should die ripe and perfect, and take my garnered experience with me into the cool, sweet earth. For I have died already and survived a death; I have seen the grass grow rankly on my grave; I have heard the train of mourners come weeping and go laughing away again. And when I was alone there in the kirk-yard, and the birds began to grow familiar with the grave-stone, I have begun to laugh also, and laughed and laughed until night-flowers came out above me. I have survived myself, and somehow live on, a curious changeling, a merry ghost; and do not mind living on, finding it not unpleasant; only had rather, a thousandfold, died and been done with the whole damned show for ever. It is a strange feeling at first to survive yourself, but one gets used to that as to most things. *Et puis*, is it not one's own fault? Why did not one lie still in the grave? Why rise again among men's troubles and toils, where the wicked wag their shock beards and hound the weary out to labour? When I was safe in prison, and stone walls and iron bars were an hermitage about me, who told me to burst the mild constraint and go forth where the sun dazzles, and the wind pierces, and the loud world sounds and jangles all through the weary day? I mind an old print of a hermit coming out of a great wood towards evening and shading his bleared eyes to see all the kingdoms of the earth before his feet, where towered cities and castled hills, and stately rivers, and good corn lands made one great chorus of temptation for his weak spirit, and I think I am the hermit, and would to God I had dwelt ever in the wood of penitence [1]——

R. L. S.

[1] The letter breaks off here.

To Sidney Colvin

The *Burns* herein mentioned is an article undertaken in the early summer of the same year for the Encyclopædia Britannica. In the end Stevenson's work was thought to convey a view of the poet too frankly critical, and too little in accordance with the accepted Scotch tradition; and the publishers, duly paying him for his labours, transferred the task to Professor Shairp. The volume here announced on the three Scottish eighteenth-century poets unfortunately never came into being. The *Charles of Orleans* essay appeared in the Cornhill Magazine for December of the following year; that on Villon (with the story on the same theme, *A Lodging for the Night*) not until the autumn of 1877. The essay on Béranger referred to at the end of the letter was one commissioned and used by the editor of the Encyclopædia; *Spring* was a prose poem, of which the manuscript, sent to me at Cambridge, was unluckily lost in the confusion of a change of rooms.

[*Edinburgh, Autumn* 1875.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Thanks for your letter and news. No—my *Burns* is not done yet, it has led me so far afield that I cannot finish it; every time I think I see my way to an end, some new game (or perhaps wild goose) starts up, and away I go. And then, again, to be plain, I shirk the work of the critical part, shirk it as a man shirks a long jump. It is awful to have to express and differentiate *Burns* in a column or two. O golly, I say, you know, it *can't* be done at the money. All the more as I'm going to write a book about it. *Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns: an Essay* (or *a critical essay?* but then I'm going to give lives of the three gentlemen, only the gist of the book is the criticism) by Robert Louis Stevenson, Advocate. How's that for cut and dry? And I *could* write this book. Unless I deceive myself, I could even write it pretty adequately. I feel as if I was really in it, and knew the game thoroughly. You see what comes of trying to write an essay on Burns in ten columns.

Meantime, when I have done Burns, I shall finish Charles of Orleans (who is in a good way, about the fifth month, I should think, and promises to be a fine healthy child, better than any of his elder brothers for a while);

and then perhaps a Villon, for Villon is a very essential part of my *Ramsay-Fergusson-Burns;* I mean, is a note in it, and will recur again and again for comparison and illustration; then, perhaps, I may try Fontainebleau, by the way. But so soon as Charles of Orleans is polished off, and immortalised for ever, he and his pipings, in a solid imperishable shrine of R. L. S., my true aim and end will be this little book. Suppose I could jerk you out 100 Cornhill pages; that would easy make 200 pages of decent form; and then thickish paper—eh? would that do? I dare say it could be made bigger; but I know what 100 pages of copy, bright consummate copy, imply behind the scenes of weary manuscribing; I think if I put another nothing to it, I should not be outside the mark; and 100 Cornhill pages of 500 words means, I fancy (but I never was good at figures), means 50,000 words. There's a prospect for an idle young gentleman who lives at home at ease! The future is thick with inky fingers. And then perhaps nobody would publish. *Ah nom de dieu!* What do you think of all this? will it paddle, think you?

I hope this pen will write; it is the third I have tried.

About coming up, no, that's impossible; for I am worse than a bankrupt. I have at the present six shillings and a penny; I have a sounding lot of bills for Christmas; new dress suit, for instance, the old one having gone for Parliament House; and new white shirts to live up to my new profession; I'm as gay and swell and gummy as can be; only all my boots leak; one pair water, and the other two simple black mud; so that my rig is more for the eye than a very solid comfort to myself. That is my budget. Dismal enough, and no prospect of any coin coming in; at least for months. So that here I am, I almost fear, for the winter; certainly till after Christmas, and then it depends on how my bills "turn out" whether it shall not be till spring. So, meantime, I must whistle in my cage. My cage is better by

one thing; I am an Advocate now. If you ask me why that makes it better, I would remind you that in the most distressing circumstances a little consequence goes a long way, and even bereaved relatives stand on precedence round the coffin. I idle finely. I read Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Martin's *History of France*, *Allan Ramsay*, *Olivier Basselin*, all sorts of rubbish *àpropos* of *Burns*, *Commines*, *Juvénal des Ursins*, etc. I walk about the Parliament House five forenoons a week, in wig and gown; I have either a five or six mile walk, or an hour or two hard skating on the rink, every afternoon, without fail.

I have not written much; but, like the seaman's parrot in the tale, I have thought a deal. You have never, by the way, returned me either *Spring* or *Béranger*, which is certainly a d–d shame. I always comforted myself with that when my conscience pricked me about a letter to you. "Thus conscience"—O no, that's not appropriate in this connection.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

I say, is there any chance of your coming north this year? Mind you that promise is now more respectable for age than is becoming. R. L. S.

TO CHARLES BAXTER

The following epistle in verse, with its mixed flavour of Burns and Horace, gives a lively picture of winter forenoons spent in the Parliament House:—

[*Edinburgh, October* 1875.]

Noo lyart leaves blaw ower the green,
Red are the bonny woods o' Dean,
An' here we're back in Embro, freen',
To pass the winter.
Whilk noo, wi' frosts afore, draws in,
An' snaws ahint her.

I've seen's hae days to fricht us a',
The Pentlands poothered weel wi' snaw,
The ways half-smoored wi' liquid thaw,
An' half-congealin',
The snell an' scowtherin' norther blaw
Frae blae Brunteelan'.

I've seen's been unco sweir to sally,
And at the door-cheeks daff an' dally,
Seen's daidle thus an' shilly-shally
For near a minute—
Sae cauld the wind blew up the valley,
The deil was in it!—

Syne spread the silk an' tak the gate
In blast an' blaudin' rain, deil hae't!
The hale toon glintin', stane an' slate,
Wi' cauld an' weet,
An' to the Court, gin we'se be late,
Bicker oor feet.

And at the Court, tae, aft I saw
Whaur Advocates by twa an' twa
Gang gesterin' end to end the ha'
In weeg an' goon,
To crack o' what ye wull but Law
The hale forenoon.

That muckle ha', maist like a kirk,
I've kent at braid mid-day sae mirk
Ye'd seen white weegs an' faces lurk
Like ghaists frae Hell,
But whether Christian ghaists or Turk
Deil ane could tell.

The three fires lunted in the gloom,
The wind blew like the blast o' doom,
The rain upo' the roof abune
Played Peter Dick——
Ye wad nae'd licht enough i' the room
Your teeth to pick!

But, freend, ye ken how me an' you,
The ling-lang lanely winter through,
Keep'd a guid speerit up, an' true
To lore Horatian,
We aye the ither bottle drew
To inclination.

Sae let us in the comin' days
Stand sicker on our auncient ways—
The strauchtest road in a' the maze
Since Eve ate apples;
An' let the winter weet our cla'es—
We'll weet our thrapples.

To Sidney Colvin

The two following letters refer to the essay on the Spirit of Spring which I was careless enough to lose in the process of a change of rooms at Cambridge. *The Petits Poèmes en Prose* were attempts, not altogether successful, in the form though not in the spirit of Baudelaire.

Swanston [*Autumn* 1875].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Thanks. Only why don't you tell me if I can get my *Spring* printed? I want to print it; because it's nice, and genuine to boot, and has got less side on than my other game. Besides I want coin badly.

I am writing *Petits Poèmes en Prose.* Their principal resemblance to Baudelaire's is that they are rather longer and not quite so good. They are ve-ry cle-ver (words of two syllables), O so aw-ful-ly cle-ver (words of three), O

so dam-na-bly cle-ver (words of a devil of a number of syllables). I have written fifteen in a fortnight. I have also written some beautiful poetry. I would like a cake and a cricket-bat; and a pass-key to Heaven if you please, and as much money as my friend the Baron Rothschild can spare. I used to look across to Rothschild of a morning when we were brushing our hair, and say—(this is quite true, only we were on the opposite side of the street, and though I used to look over I cannot say I ever detected the beggar, he feared to meet my eagle eye)—well, I used to say to him, "Rothschild, old man, lend us five hundred francs," and it is characteristic of Rothy's dry humour that he used never to reply when it was a question of money. He was a very humorous dog indeed, was Rothy. Heigh-ho! those happy old days. Funny, funny fellow, the dear old Baron.

How's that for genuine American wit and humour? Take notice of this in your answer; say, for instance, "Even although the letter had been unsigned, I could have had no difficulty in guessing who was my dear, *lively, witty* correspondent. Yours, Letitia Languish."

O!—my mind has given way. I have gone into a mild, babbling, sunny idiocy. I shall buy a Jew's harp and sit by the roadside with a woman's bonnet on my manly head begging my honest livelihood. Meantime, adieu.

I would send you some of these *PP. Poèmes* of mine, only I know you would never acknowledge receipt or return them.—Yours, and Rothschild's,

R. L. Stevenson.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Edinburgh, Autumn* 1875.]

my dear colvin,—*Fous ne me gombrennez pas.* Angry with you? No. Is the thing lost? Well, so be it. There is one masterpiece fewer in the world. The world can ill

spare it, but I, sir, I (and here I strike my hollow bosom so that it resounds) I am full of this sort of bauble; I am made of it; it comes to me, sir, as the desire to sneeze comes upon poor ordinary devils on cold days, when they should be getting out of bed and into their horrid cold tubs by the light of a seven o'clock candle, with the dismal seven o'clock frost-flowers all over the window.

Show Stephen what you please; if you could show him how to give me money, you would oblige, sincerely yours, R. L. S.

I have a scroll of *Springtime* somewhere, but I know that it is not in very good order, and do not feel myself up to very much grind over it. I am damped about *Springtime*, that's the truth of it. It might have been four or five quid!

Sir, I shall shave my head, if this goes on. All men take a pleasure to gird at me. The laws of nature are in open war with me. The wheel of a dog-cart took the toes off my new boots. Gout has set in with extreme rigour, and cut me out of the cheap refreshment of beer. I leant my back against an oak, I thought it was a trusty tree, but first it bent, and syne—it lost the Spirit of Springtime, and so did Professor Sidney Colvin, Trinity College, to me.—Ever yours, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Along with this, I send you some *P.P.P.*'s; if you lose them, you need not seek to look upon my face again. Do, for God's sake, answer me about them also; it is a horrid thing for a fond architect to find his monuments received in silence.—Yours, R. L. S.

TO MRS. SITWELL

[*Edinburgh, November* 12, 1875.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Since I got your letter I have been able to do a little more work, and I have been much better contented with myself; but I can't get away, that is absolutely prevented by the state of my purse and my

debts, which, I may say, are red like crimson. I don't know how I am to clear my hands of them, nor when, not before Christmas anyway. Yesterday I was twenty-five; so please wish me many happy returns—directly. This one was not *un*happy anyway. I have got back a good deal into my old random, little-thought way of life, and do not care whether I read, write, speak, or walk, so long as I do something. I have a great delight in this wheel-skating; I have made great advance in it of late, can do a good many amusing things (I mean amusing in *my* sense—amusing to do). You know, I lose all my fore-noons at Court! So it is, but the time passes; it is a great pleasure to sit and hear cases argued or advised. This is quite autobiographical, but I feel as if it was some time since we met, and I can tell you, I am glad to meet you again. In every way, you see, but that of work the world goes well with me. My health is better than ever it was before; I get on without any jar, nay, as if there never had been a jar, with my parents. If it weren't about that work, I'd be happy. But the fact is, I don't think—the fact is, I'm going to trust in Providence about work. If I could get one or two pieces I hate out of my way all would be well, I think; but these obstacles disgust me, and as I know I ought to do them first, I don't do anything. I must finish this off, or I'll just lose another day. I'll try to write again soon.—Ever your faithful friend,

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

The review of Robert Browning's *Inn Album* here mentioned appears in Vanity Fair, Dec. 11, 1875. The matter of the poem is praised; the "slating" is only for the form and metres.

[*Edinburgh, December* 1875.]

Well, I am hardy! Here I am in the midst of this great snowstorm, sleeping with my window open and *smoking* in my cold tub in the morning so as it would do

your heart good to see. Moreover I am in pretty good form otherwise. Fontainebleau lags; it has turned out more difficult than I expected in some places, but there is a deal of it ready, and (I think) straight.

I was at a concert on Saturday and heard Hallé and Norman Neruda play that Sonata of Beethoven's you remember, and I felt very funny. But I went and took a long spanking walk in the dark and got quite an appetite for dinner. I did; that's not bragging.

As you say, a concert wants to be gone to *with* someone, and I know who. I have done rather an amusing paragraph or two for Vanity Fair on the *Inn Album.* I have slated R. B. pretty handsomely. I am in a desperate hurry; so good-bye.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. DE MATTOS

The state of health and spirits mentioned in the last soon gave way to one of the fits of depression, frequent with him in Edinburgh winters. In the following letter he unbosoms himself to a favourite cousin (sister to R. A. M. Stevenson).

Edinburgh, January 1876.

MY DEAR KATHARINE,—The prisoner reserved his defence. He has been seedy, however; principally sick of the family evil, despondency; the sun is gone out utterly; and the breath of the people of this city lies about as a sort of damp, unwholesome fog, in which we go walking with bowed hearts. If I understand what is a contrite spirit, I have one; it is to feel that you are a small jar, or rather, as I feel myself, a very large jar, of pottery work rather *mal réussi*, and to make every allowance for the potter (I beg pardon; Potter with a capital P.) on his ill-success, and rather wish he would reduce you as soon as possible to potsherds. However, there are many things to do yet before we go

Grossir la pâte universelle
Faite des formes que Dieu fond.

For instance, I have never been in a revolution yet. I pray God I may be in one at the end, if I am to make a mucker. The best way to make a mucker is to have your back set against a wall and a few lead pellets whiffed into you in a moment, while yet you are all in a heat and a fury of combat, with drums sounding on all sides, and people crying, and a general smash like the infernal orchestration at the end of the *Huguenots*. . . .

Please pardon me for having been so long of writing, and show your pardon by writing soon to me; it will be a kindness, for I am sometimes very dull. Edinburgh is much changed for the worse by the absence of Bob; and this damned weather weighs on me like a curse. Yesterday, or the day before, there came so black a rain squall that I was frightened—what a child would call frightened, you know, for want of a better word—although in reality it has nothing to do with fright. I lit the gas and sat cowering in my chair until it went away again.—Ever yours,

R. L. S.

O, I am trying my hand at a novel just now; it may interest you to know, I am bound to say I do not think it will be a success. However, it's an amusement for the moment, and work, work is your only ally against the "bearded people" that squat upon their hams in the dark places of life and embrace people horribly as they go by. God save us from the bearded people! to think that the sun is still shining in some happy places!

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

[*Edinburgh, January* 1876.]

. . . Our weather continues as it was, bitterly cold, and raining often. There is not much pleasure in life certainly as it stands at present. *Nous n'irons plus au bois, hélas!*

I meant to write some more last night, but my father was ill and it put it out of my way. He is better this morning.

If I had written last night, I should have written a lot. But this morning I am so dreadfully tired and stupid that I can say nothing. I was down at Leith in the afternoon. God bless me, what horrid women I saw; I never knew what a plain-looking race it was before. I was sick at heart with the looks of them. And the children, filthy and ragged! And the smells! And the fat black mud!

My soul was full of disgust ere I got back. And yet the ships were beautiful to see, as they are always; and on the pier there was a clean cold wind that smelt a little of the sea, though it came down the Firth, and the sunset had a certain *éclat* and warmth. Perhaps if I could get more work done, I should be in a better trim to enjoy filthy streets and people and cold grim weather; but I don't much feel as if it was what I would have chosen. I am tempted every day of my life to go off on another walking tour. I like that better than anything else that I know.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO SIDNEY COLVIN

Fontainebleau is the paper called *Forest Notes* which appeared in the Cornhill Magazine in May of this year (reprinted in *Essays of Travel*). The *Winter's Walk*, as far as it goes one of the most charming of his essays of the Road, was for some reason never finished; reprinted *ibidem*.

[*Edinburgh, February* 1876.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—1*st*. I have sent *Fontainebleau* long ago, long ago. And Leslie Stephen is worse than tepid about it—liked "some parts" of it "very well," the son of Belial. Moreover, he proposes to shorten it; and I, who want *money*, and money soon, and not glory and

the illustration of the English language, I feel as if my poverty were going to consent.

2*nd*. I'm as fit as a fiddle after my walk. I am four inches bigger about the waist than last July! There, that's your prophecy did that. I am on *Charles of Orleans* now, but I don't know where to send him. Stephen obviously spews me out of his mouth, and I spew him out of mine, so help me! A man who doesn't like my *Fontainebleau!* His head must be turned.

3*rd*. If ever you do come across my *Spring* (I beg your pardon for referring to it again, but I don't want you to forget) send it off at once.

4*th*. I went to Ayr, Maybole, Girvan, Ballantrae, Stranraer, Glenluce, and Wigton. I shall make an article of it some day soon, *A Winter's Walk in Carrick and Galloway*. I had a good time.—Yours, R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

" Baynes " in the following is Stevenson's good friend and mine, the late Professor Spencer Baynes, who was just relinquishing the editorship of the Encyclopædia Britannica by reason of ill-health.

[*Swanston, July* 1876.]

Here I am, here, and very well too. I am glad you liked *Walking Tours;* I like it, too; I think it's prose; and I own with contrition that I have not always written prose. However, I am " endeavouring after new obedience " (Scot. Shorter Catechism). You don't say aught of *Forest Notes*, which is kind. There is one, if you will, that was too sweet to be wholesome.

I am at Charles d'Orléans. About fifteen Cornhill pages have already coulé'd from under my facile plume —no, I mean eleven, fifteen of MS.—and we are not much more than half-way through, Charles and I; but he's a pleasant companion. My health is very well; I am in a fine exercisy state. Baynes is gone to London;

if you see him, inquire about my *Burns*. They have sent me £5, 5s. for it, which has mollified me horrid. £5, 5s. is a good deal to pay for a read of it in MS.; I can't complain.—Yours, R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

This dates from just before the canoeing trip recounted in the *Inland Voyage*.

[*Swanston, July* 1876.]

Well, here I am at last; it is a Sunday, blowing hard, with a grey sky with the leaves flying; and I have nothing to say. I ought to have no doubt; since it's so long since last I wrote; but there are times when people's lives stand still. If you were to ask a squirrel in a mechanical cage for his autobiography, it would not be very gay. Every spin may be amusing in itself, but is mighty like the last; you see I compare myself to a lighthearted animal; and indeed I have been in a very good humour. For the weather has been passable; I have taken a deal of exercise, and done some work. But I have the strangest repugnance for writing; indeed, I have nearly got myself persuaded into the notion that letters don't arrive, in order to salve my conscience for never sending them off. I'm reading a great deal of fifteenth century: *Trial of Joan of Arc*, *Paston Letters*, *Basin*,[1] etc., also Boswell daily by way of a Bible; I mean to read Boswell now until the day I die. And now and again a bit of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Is that all? Yes, I think that's all. I have a thing in proof for the Cornhill called *Virginibus Puerisque*. *Charles of Orleans* is again laid aside, but in a good state of furtherance this time. A paper called *A Defence of Idlers* (which is really a defence of R. L. S.) is in a good way. So, you see, I am busy in a tumultuous, knotless sort of fashion; and

[1] Thomas Basin or Bazin, the historian of Charles VIII. and Louis XI.

as I say, I take lots of exercise, and I'm as brown as a berry.

This is the first letter I've written for—O I don't know how long.

July 30th.—This is, I suppose, three weeks after I began. Do, please, forgive me.

To the Highlands, first, to the Jenkins'; then to Antwerp; thence, by canoe with Simpson, to Paris and Grez (on the Loing, and an old acquaintance of mine on the skirts of Fontainebleau) to complete our cruise next spring (if we're all alive and jolly) by Loing and Loire, Saone and Rhone to the Mediterranean. It should make a jolly book of gossip, I imagine.

God bless you. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S.—Virginibus Puerisque is in August Cornhill. *Charles of Orleans* is finished, and sent to Stephen; *Idlers* ditto, and sent to Grove; but I've no word of either. So I've not been idle. R. L. S.

To W. E. HENLEY

In a well-known passage of the *Inland Voyage* the following incident is related to the same purport, but in another style:—

Chauny, Aisne [*September* 1876].

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Here I am, you see; and if you will take to a map, you will observe I am already more than two doors from Antwerp, whence I started. I have fought it through under the worst weather I ever saw in France; I have been wet through nearly every day of travel since the second (inclusive); besides this, I have had to fight against pretty mouldy health; so that, on the whole, the essayist and reviewer has shown, I think, some pluck. Four days ago I was not a hundred miles from being miserably drowned, to the immense regret of a large circle of friends and the permanent impoverishment of British Essayism and Reviewery. My boat cul-

butted me under a fallen tree in a very rapid current; and I was a good while before I got on to the outside of that fallen tree; rather a better while than I cared about. When I got up, I lay some time on my belly, panting, and exuded fluid. All my symptoms *jusqu' ici* are trifling. But I've a damned sore throat.—Yours ever, R. L. S.

To Mrs. Sitwell

Part of *The Hair Trunk* still exists in MS. It contains some tolerable fooling, but is chiefly interesting from the fact that the seat of the proposed Bohemian colony from Cambridge is to be in the Navigator Islands; showing the direction which had been given to Stevenson's thoughts by the conversation of the New Zealand official, Mr. Sced, two years before.

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh, May* 1877.

. . . A PERFECT chorus of repudiation is sounding in my ears; and although you say nothing, I know you must be repudiating me, all the same. Write I cannot —there's no good mincing matters, a letter frightens me worse than the devil; and I am just as unfit for correspondence as if I had never learned the three R.'s.

Let me give my news quickly before I relapse into my usual idleness. I have a terror lest I should relapse before I get this finished. Courage, R. L. S.! On Leslie Stephen's advice, I gave up the idea of a book of essays. He said he didn't imagine I was rich enough for such an amusement; and moreover, whatever was worth publication was worth republication. So the best of those I had already, *An Apology for Idlers*, is in proof for the Cornhill. I have *Villon* to do for the same magazine, but God knows when I'll get it done, for drums, trumpets—I'm engaged upon—trumpets, drums—a novel! "THE HAIR TRUNK; OR, THE IDEAL COMMONWEALTH." It is a most absurd story of a lot of young Cambridge fellows who are going to found a new society, with no ideas on the subject, and nothing but Bohemian tastes in the place of ideas; and

who are—well, I can't explain about the trunk—it would take too long—but the trunk is the fun of it—everybody steals it; burglary, marine fight, life on desert island on west coast of Scotland, sloops, etc. The first scene where they make their grand schemes and get drunk is supposed to be very funny, by Henley. I really saw him laugh over it until he cried.

Please write to me, although I deserve it so little, and show a Christian spirit.—Ever your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Edinburgh, August* 1877.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I'm to be whipped away to-morrow to Penzance, where at the post-office a letter will find me glad and grateful. I am well, but somewhat tired out with overwork. I have only been home a fortnight this morning, and I have already written to the tune of forty-five Cornhill pages and upwards. The most of it was only very laborious re-casting and re-modelling, it is true; but it took it out of me famously, all the same.

Temple Bar appears to like my *Villon*, so I may count on another market there in the future, I hope. At least, I am going to put it to the proof at once, and send another story, *The Sire de Malétroit's Mousetrap:* a true novel, in the old sense; all unities preserved moreover, if that's anything, and I believe with some little merits; not so *clever* perhaps as the last, but sounder and more natural.

My *Villon* is out this month; I should so much like to know what you think of it. Stephen has written to me à propos of *Idlers*, that something more in that vein would be agreeable to his views. From Stephen I count that a devil of a lot.

I am honestly so tired this morning that I hope you will take this for what it's worth and give me an answer in peace.—Ever yours, LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Mrs. Sitwell

Neither *The Stepfather's Story* nor the *St. Michael's Mounts* essay here mentioned ever, to my knowledge, came into being.

[*Penzance, August* 1877.]

. . . You will do well to stick to your burn, that is a delightful life you sketch, and a very fountain of health. I wish I could live like that, but, alas! it is just as well I got my "Idlers" written and done with, for I have quite lost all power of resting. I have a goad in my flesh continually, pushing me to work, work, work. I have an essay pretty well through for Stephen; a story, *The Sire de Malétroit's Mousetrap*, with which I shall try Temple Bar; another story, in the clouds, *The Stepfather's Story*, most pathetic work of a high morality or immorality, according to point of view; and lastly, also in the clouds, or perhaps a little farther away, an essay on *The Two St. Michael's Mounts*, historical and picturesque; perhaps if it didn't come too long, I might throw in the *Bass Rock*, and call it *Three Sea Fortalices*, or something of that kind. You see how work keeps bubbling in my mind. Then I shall do another fifteenth century paper this autumn—La Sale and *Petit Jehan de Saintré*, which is a kind of fifteenth century *Sandford and Merton*, ending in horrid immoral cynicism, as if the author had got tired of being didactic, and just had a good wallow in the mire to wind up with and indemnify himself for so much restraint.

Cornwall is not much to my taste, being as bleak as the bleakest parts of Scotland, and nothing like so pointed and characteristic. It has a flavour of its own, though, which I may try and catch, if I find the space, in the proposed article. *Will o' the Mill* I sent, red hot, to Stephen in a fit of haste, and have not yet had an answer. I am quite prepared for a refusal. But I begin to have more hope in the story line, and that should improve my

income anyway. I am glad you liked *Villon;* some of it was not as good as it ought to be, but on the whole it seems pretty vivid, and the features strongly marked. Vividness and not style is now my line; style is all very well, but vividness is the real line of country; if a thing is meant to be read, it seems just as well to try and make it readable. I am such a dull person now, I cannot keep off my own immortal works. Indeed, they are scarcely ever out of my head. And yet I value them less and less every day. But occupation is the great thing; so that a man should have his life in his own pocket, and never be thrown out of work by anything. I am glad to hear you are better. I must stop—going to Land's End.—Always your faithful friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To A. PATCHETT MARTIN

This correspondent, living at the time in Australia, was, I believe, the first to write and seek Stevenson's acquaintance from admiration of his work, meaning especially the Cornhill essays of the *Virginibus Puerisque* series so far as they had yet appeared. The "present" herein referred to is Mr. Martin's volume called *A Sweet Girl Graduate and other Poems* (Melbourne, 1876).

[1877]

DEAR SIR,—It would not be very easy for me to give you any idea of the pleasure I found in your present. People who write for the magazines (probably from a guilty conscience) are apt to suppose their works practically unpublished. It seems unlikely that any one would take the trouble to read a little paper buried among so many others; and reading it, read it with any attention or pleasure. And so, I can assure you, your little book, coming from so far, gave me all the pleasure and encouragement in the world.

I suppose you know and remember Charles Lamb's essay on distant correspondents? Well, I was somewhat of his way of thinking about my mild productions. I did

not indeed imagine they were read, and (I suppose I may say) enjoyed right round upon the other side of the big Football we have the honour to inhabit. And as your present was the first sign to the contrary, I feel I have been very ungrateful in not writing earlier to acknowledge the receipt. I dare say, however, you hate writing letters as much as I can do myself (for if you like my article, I may presume other points of sympathy between us); and on this hypothesis you will be ready to forgive me the delay.

I may mention with regard to the piece of verses called *Such is Life* that I am not the only one on this side of the Football aforesaid to think it a good and bright piece of work, and recognised a link of sympathy with the poets who "play in hostelries at euchre."—Believe me, dear sir, yours truly, R. L. S.

To A. Patchett Martin

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh* [*December* 1877].

MY DEAR SIR,—I am afraid you must already have condemned me for a very idle fellow truly. Here it is more than two months since I received your letter; I had no fewer than three journals to acknowledge; and never a sign upon my part. If you have seen a Cornhill paper of mine upon idling, you will be inclined to set it all down to that. But you will not be doing me justice. Indeed, I have had a summer so troubled that I have had little leisure and still less inclination to write letters. I was keeping the devil at bay with all my disposable activities; and more than once I thought he had me by the throat. The odd conditions of our acquaintance enable me to say more to you than I would to a person who lived at my elbow. And besides, I am too much pleased and flattered at our correspondence not to go as far as I can to set myself right in your eyes.

In this damnable confusion (I beg pardon) I have lost

all my possessions, or near about, and quite lost all my wits. I wish I could lay my hands on the numbers of the Review, for I know I wished to say something on that head more particularly than I can from memory; but where they have escaped to, only time or chance can show. However, I can tell you so far, that I was very much pleased with the article on Bret Harte; it seemed to me just, clear, and to the point. I agreed pretty well with all you said about George Eliot: a high, but, may we not add?—a rather dry lady. Did you—I forget—did you have a kick at the stern works of that melancholy puppy and humbug Daniel Deronda himself?—the Prince of Prigs; the literary abomination of desolation in the way of manhood; a type which is enough to make a man forswear the love of women, if that is how it must be gained. . . . Hats off all the same, you understand: a woman of genius.

Of your poems I have myself a kindness for *Noll and Nell*, although I don't think you have made it as good as you ought: verse five is surely not *quite melodious*. I confess I like the Sonnet in the last number of the Review —the *Sonnet to England*.

Please, if you have not, and I don't suppose you have, already read it, institute a search in all Melbourne for one of the rarest and certainly one of the best of books —*Clarissa Harlowe*. For any man who takes an interest in the problems of the two sexes, that book is a perfect mine of documents. And it is written, sir, with the pen of an angel. Miss Howe and Lovelace, words cannot tell how good they are! And the scene where Clarissa beards her family, with her fan going all the while; and some of the quarrel scenes between her and Lovelace; and the scene where Colonel Marden goes to Mr. Hall, with Lord M. trying to compose matters, and the Colonel with his eternal "finest woman in the world," and the inimitable affirmation of Mobray—nothing, nothing could be better! You will bless me when you read it for this recommendation;

but, indeed, I can do nothing but recommend Clarissa. I am like that Frenchman of the eighteenth century who discovered Habakkuk, and would give no one peace about that respectable Hebrew. For my part, I never was able to get over his eminently respectable name; Isaiah is the boy, if you must have a prophet, no less. About Clarissa, I meditate a choice work: *A Dialogue on Man, Woman, and "Clarissa Harlowe."* It is to be so clever that no array of terms can give you any idea; and very likely that particular array in which I shall finally embody it, less than any other.

Do you know, my dear sir, what I like best in your letter? The egotism for which you thought necessary to apologise. I am a rogue at egotism myself; and to be plain, I have rarely or never liked any man who was not. The first step to discovering the beauties of God's universe is usually a (perhaps partial) apprehension of such of them as adorn our own characters. When I see a man who does not think pretty well of himself, I always suspect him of being in the right. And besides, if he does not like himself, whom he has seen, how is he ever to like one whom he never can see but in dim and artificial presentments?

I cordially reciprocate your offer of a welcome; it shall be at least a warm one. Are you not my first, my only, admirer—a dear tie? Besides, you are a man of sense, and you treat me as one by writing to me as you do, and that gives me pleasure also. Please continue to let me see your work. I have one or two things coming out in the Cornhill: a story called *The Sire de Malétroit's Door* in Temple Bar; and a series of articles on Edinburgh in the Portfolio; but I don't know if these last fly all the way to Melbourne.—Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO SIDNEY COLVIN

The *Inland Voyage*, it must be remembered, at this time just put into the publisher's hands, was the author's first book. The "Crane

sketch" mentioned in the second of the following notes to me was the well-known frontispiece to that book on which Mr. Walter Crane was then at work. The essay *Pan's Pipes*, reprinted in *Virginibus Puerisque*, was written about this time.

Hôtel des Étrangers, Dieppe, January 1, 1878.

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I am at the *Inland Voyage* again: have finished another section, and have only two more to execute. But one at least of these will be very long —the longest in the book—being a great digression on French artistic tramps. I only hope Paul may take the thing; I want coin so badly, and besides it would be something done—something put outside of me and off my conscience; and I should not feel such a muff as I do, if once I saw the thing in boards with a ticket on its back. I think I shall frequent circulating libraries a good deal. The Preface shall stand over, as you suggest, until the last, and then, sir, we shall see. This to be read with a big voice.

This is New Year's Day: let me, my dear Colvin, wish you a very good year, free of all misunderstanding and bereavement, and full of good weather and good work. You know best what you have done for me, and so you will know best how heartily I mean this.—Ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

I had had business in Edinburgh, and had stayed with Stevenson's parents in his absence.

[*Paris, January or February* 1878.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Many thanks for your letter. I was much interested by all the Edinburgh gossip. Most likely I shall arrive in London next week. I think you know all about the Crane sketch; but it should be a river, not a canal, you know, and the look should be "cruel, lewd, and kindly," all at once. There is more sense in that Greek myth of Pan than in any other that I recollect except the luminous Hebrew one of the Fall: one of the

biggest things done. If people would remember that all religions are no more than representations of life, they would find them, as they are, the best representations, licking Shakespeare.

What an inconceivable cheese is Alfred de Musset! His comedies are, to my view, the best work of France this century: a large order. Did you ever read them? They are real, clear, living work.—Ever yours,

R. L. S.

To Thomas Stevenson

Café de la Source, Bd. St. Michel,
Paris, 15th Feb. 1878.

MY DEAR FATHER,—A thought has come into my head which I think would interest you. Christianity is among other things, a very wise, noble, and strange doctrine of life. Nothing is so difficult to specify as the position it occupies with regard to asceticism. It is not ascetic. Christ was of all doctors (if you will let me use the word) one of the least ascetic. And yet there is a theory of living in the Gospels which is curiously indefinable, and leans towards asceticism on one side, although it leans away from it on the other. In fact, asceticism is used therein as a means, not as an end. The wisdom of this world consists in making oneself very little in order to avoid many knocks; in preferring others, in order that, even when we lose, we shall find some pleasure in the event; in putting our desires outside of ourselves, in another ship, so to speak, so that, when the worst happens, there will be something left. You see, I speak of it as a doctrine of life, and as a wisdom for this world. People must be themselves, I suppose. I feel every day as if religion had a greater interest for me; but that interest is still centred on the little rough-and-tumble world in which our fortunes are cast for the moment. I cannot transfer my interests, not even my religious interest, to any different sphere. . . . I have had some sharp lessons

and some very acute sufferings in these last seven-and-twenty years—more even than you would guess. I begin to grow an old man; a little sharp, I fear, and a little close and unfriendly; but still I have a good heart, and believe in myself and my fellow-men and the God who made us all. . . . There are not many sadder people in this world, perhaps, than I. I have my eye on a sick-bed;[1] I have written letters to-day that it hurt me to write, and I fear it will hurt others to receive; I am lonely and sick and out of heart. Well, I still hope; I still believe; I still see the good in the inch, and cling to it. It is not much, perhaps, but it is always something.

I find I have wandered a thousand miles from what I meant. It was this: of all passages bearing on Christianity in that form of a worldly wisdom, the most Christian, and so to speak, the key of the whole position, is the Christian doctrine of revenge. And it appears that this came into the world through Paul! There is a fact for you. It was to speak of this that I began this letter; but I have got into deep seas and must go on.

There is a fine text in the Bible, I don't know where, to the effect that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord. Strange as it may seem to you, everything has been, in one way or the other, bringing me a little nearer to what I think you would like me to be. 'Tis a strange world, indeed, but there is a manifest God for those who care to look for him.

This is a very solemn letter for my surroundings in this busy café; but I had it on my heart to write it; and, indeed, I was out of the humour for anything lighter.—Ever your affectionate son, Robert Louis Stevenson.

P.S.—While I am writing gravely, let me say one word more. I have taken a step towards more intimate relations with you. But don't expect too much of me. Try to take me as I am. This is a rare moment, and I

[1] R. Glasgow Brown lay dying in the Riviera.

have profited by it; but take it as a rare moment. Usually I hate to speak of what I really feel, to that extent that when I find myself *cornered*, I have a tendency to say the reverse. R. L. S.

To Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

Paris, 44 *Bd. Haussmann*,
Friday, February 21, 1878.

MY DEAR PEOPLE,—Do you know who is my favourite author just now? How are the mighty fallen! Anthony Trollope. I batten on him; he is so nearly wearying you, and yet he never does; or rather, he never does, until he gets near the end, when he begins to wean you from him, so that you're as pleased to be done with him as you thought you would be sorry. I wonder if it's old age? It is a little, I am sure. A young person would get sickened by the dead level of meanness and cowardliness; you require to be a little spoiled and cynical before you can enjoy it. I have just finished the *Way of the World;* there is only one person in it—no, there are three —who are nice: the wild American woman, and two of the dissipated young men, Dolly and Lord Nidderdale. All the heroes and heroines are just ghastly. But what a triumph is Lady Carbury! That is real, sound, strong, genuine work: the man who could do that, if he had had courage, might have written a fine book; he has preferred to write many readable ones. I meant to write such a long, nice letter, but I cannot hold the pen.

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

The following refers to the newspaper criticisms on the *Inland Voyage*:—

Hôtel du Val de Grâce, Rue St. Jacques,
Paris, Sunday [*June* 1878].

MY DEAR MOTHER,—About criticisms, I was more surprised at the tone of the critics than I suppose any one

else. And the effect it has produced in me is one of shame. If they liked that so much, I ought to have given them something better, that's all. And I shall try to do so. Still, it strikes me as odd; and I don't understand the vogue. It should sell the thing.—Ever your affectionate son,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. THOMAS STEVENSON

This letter tells of the progress of the Portfolio papers called *Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh*, and of preparations for the walking tour narrated in *Travels with a Donkey*. The late Philip Gilbert Hamerton, editor of the Portfolio and author of *A Painter's Camp in the Highlands* and of many well-known works on art, landscape, and French social life, was at this time and for many years living at a small chateau near Autun; and the visit here proposed was actually paid and gave great pleasure alike to host and guest (see *P. G. Hamerton, an Autobiography*, etc., p. 451).

Monastier, September 1878.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—You must not expect to hear much from me for the next two weeks; for I am near starting. Donkey purchased—a love—price, 65 francs and a glass of brandy. My route is all pretty well laid out; I shall go near no town till I get to Alais. Remember, Poste Restante, Alais, Gard. Greyfriars will be in October. You did not say whether you liked September; you might tell me that at Alais. The other No.'s of Edinburgh are: Parliament Close, Villa Quarters (which perhaps may not appear), Calton Hill, Winter and New Year, and to the Pentland Hills. 'Tis a kind of book nobody would ever care to read; but none of the young men could have done it better than I have, which is always a consolation. I read *Inland Voyage* the other day: what rubbish these reviewers did talk! It is not badly written, thin, mildly cheery, and strained. *Selon moi.* I mean to visit Hamerton on my return journey; otherwise, I should come by sea from Marseilles. I am

very well known here now; indeed, quite a feature of the place.—Your affectionate son, R. L. S.

The Engineer is the Conductor of Roads and Bridges; then I have the Receiver of Registrations, the First Clerk of Excise, and the Perceiver of the Impost. That is our dinner party. I am a sort of hovering government official, as you see. But away—away from these great companions!

To W. E. Henley

[*Monastier, September* 1878.]

DEAR HENLEY,—I hope to leave Monastier this day (Saturday) week; thenceforward Poste Restante, Alais, Gard, is my address. *Travels with a Donkey in the French Highlands.* I am no good to-day. I cannot work, nor even write letters. A colossal breakfast yesterday at Puy has, I think, done for me for ever; I certainly ate more than ever I ate before in my life—a big slice of melon, some ham and jelly, a *filet*, a helping of gudgeons, the breast and leg of a partridge, some green peas, eight crayfish, some Mont d'Or cheese, a peach, and a handful of biscuits, macaroons, and things. It sounds Gargantuan: it cost three francs a head. So that it was inexpensive to the pocket, although I fear it may prove extravagant to the fleshly tabernacle. I can't think how I did it or why. It is a new form of excess for me; but I think it pays less than any of them. R. L. S.

To Charles Baxter

Monastier, at Morel's [*September* 1878].

Lud knows about date, *vide* postmark.

MY DEAR CHARLES,—Yours (with enclosures) of the 16th to hand. All work done. I go to Le Puy to-morrow to dispatch baggage, get cash, stand lunch to engineer, who has been very jolly and useful to me, and hope by

five o'clock on Saturday morning to be driving Modestine towards the Gévaudan. Modestine is my ânesse; a darling, mouse-colour, about the size of a Newfoundland dog (bigger, between you and me), the colour of a mouse, costing 65 francs and a glass of brandy. Glad you sent on all the coin; was half afraid I might come to a stick in the mountains, donkey and all, which would have been the devil. Have finished *Arabian Nights* and Edinburgh book, and am a free man. Next address, Poste Restante, Alais, Gard. Give my servilities to the family. Health bad; spirits, I think, looking up.—Ever yours,

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

Paris, October 1878.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I have seen Hamerton; he was very kind, all his family seemed pleased to see an *Inland Voyager*, and the book seemed to be quite a household word with them. P. G. himself promised to help me in my bargains with publishers, which, said he, and I doubt not very truthfully, he could manage to much greater advantage than I. He is also to read an *Inland Voyage* over again, and send me his cuts and cuffs in private, after having liberally administered his kisses *coram publico*. I liked him very much. Of all the pleasant parts of my profession, I think the spirit of other men of letters makes the pleasantest.

Do you know, your sunset was very good? The "attack" (to speak learnedly) was so plucky and odd. I have thought of it repeatedly since. I have just made a delightful dinner by myself in the Café Félix, where I am an old established beggar, and am just smoking a cigar over my coffee. I came last night from Autun, and I am muddled about my plans. The world is such a dance!—Ever your affectionate son,

Robert Louis Stevenson.

To W. E. Henley

Stevenson, hard at work upon *Providence and the Guitar*, *New Arabian Nights*, and *Travels with a Donkey*, was at this time occupying for a few days my rooms at Trinity in my absence. The college buildings and gardens, the ideal setting and careful tutelage of English academic life—in these respects so strongly contrasted with the Scottish—affected him always with a sense of unreality. The gyp mentioned is the present head porter of the college.

[*Trinity College, Cambridge, Autumn* 1878.]

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Here I am living like a fighting-cock, and have not spoken to a real person for about sixty hours. Those who wait on me are not real. The man I know to be a myth, because I have seen him acting so often in the Palais Royal. He plays the Duke in *Tricoche et Cacolet;* I knew his nose at once. The part he plays here is very dull for him, but conscientious. As for the bedmaker, she's a dream, a kind of cheerful, innocent nightmare; I never saw so poor an imitation of humanity. I cannot work—*cannot.* Even the *Guitar* is still undone; I can only write ditch-water. 'Tis ghastly; but I am quite cheerful, and that is more important. Do you think you could prepare the printers for a possible breakdown this week? I shall try all I know on Monday; but if I can get nothing better than I got this morning, I prefer to drop a week. Telegraph to me if you think it necessary. I shall not leave till Wednesday at soonest. Shall write again. R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

The matter of the loan and its repayment, here touched on, comes up again in Stevenson's last letter of all, that which closes the book. Stevenson and Mr. Gosse had planned a joint book of old murder stories retold, and had been to visit the scene of one famous murder together.

[*Edinburgh, April* 16, 1879]

Pool of Siloam, by El Dorado,
Delectable Mountains, Arcadia.

MY DEAR GOSSE,—Herewith of the dibbs—a homely

fiver. How, and why, do you continue to exist? I do so ill, but for a variety of reasons. First, I wait an angel to come down and trouble the waters; second, more angels; third—well, more angels. The waters are sluggish; the angels—well, the angels won't come, that's about all. But I sit waiting and waiting, and people bring me meals, which help to pass time (I'm sure it's very kind of them), and sometimes I whistle to myself; and as there's a very pretty echo at my pool of Siloam, the thing's agreeable to hear. The sun continues to rise every day, to my growing wonder. "The moon by night thee shall not smite." And the stars are all doing as well as can be expected. The air of Arcady is very brisk and pure, and we command many enchanting prospects in space and time. I do not yet know much about my situation; for, to tell the truth, I only came here by the run since I began to write this letter; I had to go back to date it; and I am grateful to you for having been the occasion of this little outing. What good travellers we are, if we had only faith; no man need stay in Edinburgh but by unbelief; my religious organ has been ailing for a while past, and I have lain a great deal in Edinburgh, a sheer hulk in consequence. But I got out my wings, and have taken a change of air.

I read your book with great interest, and ought long ago to have told you so. An ordinary man would say that he had been waiting till he could pay his debts. . . . The book is good reading. Your personal notes of those you saw struck me as perhaps most sharp and "best held." See as many people as you can, and make a book of them before you die. That will be a living book, upon my word. You have the touch required. I ask you to put hands to it in private already. Think of what Carlyle's caricature of old Coleridge is to us who never saw S. T. C. With that and *Kubla Khan*, we have the man in the fact. Carlyle's picture, of course, is not of the author of *Kubla*, but of the author of that surprising

Friend which has knocked the breath out of two generations of hopeful youth. Your portraits would be milder, sweeter, more true perhaps, and perhaps not so truth-*telling*—if you will take my meaning.

I have to thank you for an introduction to that beautiful—no, that's not the word—that jolly, with an Arcadian jollity—thing of Vogelweide's. Also for your preface. Some day I want to read a whole book in the same picked dialect as that preface. I think it must be one E. W. Gosse who must write it. He has got himself into a fix with me by writing the preface; I look for a great deal, and will not be easily pleased.

I never thought of it, but my new book, which should soon be out, contains a visit to a murder scene, but not done as we should like to see them, for, of course, I was running another hare.

If you do not answer this in four pages, I shall stop the enclosed fiver at the bank, a step which will lead to your incarceration for life. As my visits to Arcady are somewhat uncertain, you had better address 17 Heriot Row, Edinburgh, as usual. I shall walk over for the note if I am not yet home.—Believe me, very really yours, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

I charge extra for a flourish when it is successful; this isn't, so you have it gratis. Is there any news in Babylon the Great? My fellow-creatures are electing school boards here in the midst of the ages. It is very composed of them. I can't think why they do it. Nor why I have written a real letter. If you write a real letter back, damme, I'll try to *correspond* with you. A thing unknown in this age. It is a consequence of the decay of faith; we cannot believe that the fellow will be at the pains to read us.

To W. E. HENLEY

This is in reply to some technical criticisms of his correspondent on the poem *Our Lady of the Snows*, referring to the Trappist

monastery in the Cévennes so called, and afterwards published in *Underwoods*.

Edinburgh [*April* 1879].

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Heavens! have I done the like? "Clarify and strain," indeed? "Make it like Marvell," no less. I'll tell you what—you may go to the devil; that's what I think. "Be eloquent" is another of your pregnant suggestions. I cannot sufficiently thank you for that one. Portrait of a person about to be eloquent at the request of a literary friend. You seem to forget, sir, that rhyme is rhyme, sir, and—go to the devil.

I'll try to improve it, but I shan't be able to—O go to the devil.

Seriously, you're a cool hand. And then you have the brass to ask me *why* "my steps went one by one"? Why? Powers of man! to rhyme with *sun*, to be sure. Why else could it be? And you yourself have been a poet! G-r-r-r-r-r! I'll never be a poet any more. Men are so d—d ungrateful and captious, I declare I could weep.

O Henley, in my hours of ease
You may say anything you please,
But when I join the Muse's revel,
Begad, I wish you at the devil!
In vain my verse I plane and bevel,
Like Banville's rhyming devotees;
In vain by many an artful swivel
Lug in my meaning by degrees;
I'm sure to hear my Henley cavil;
And grovelling prostrate on my knees,
Devote his body to the seas,
His correspondence to the devil!

Impromptu poem.

I'm going to Shandon Hydropathic *cum parentibus*. Write here. I heard from Lang. Ferrier prayeth to be remembered; he means to write, likes his Tourgenieff greatly. Also likes my *What was on the Slate*, which, under a new

title, yet unfound, and with a new and, on the whole, kindly *dénouement*, is going to shoot up and become a star. . . .

I see I must write some more to you about my Monastery. I am a weak brother in verse. You ask me to re-write things that I have already managed just to write with the skin of my teeth. If I don't re-write them, it's because I don't see how to write them better, not because I don't think they should be. But, curiously enough, you condemn two of my favourite passages, one of which is J. W. Ferrier's favourite of the whole. Here I shall think it's you who are wrong. You see, I did not try to make good verse, but to say what I wanted as well as verse would let me. I don't like the rhyme "ear" and "hear." But the couplet, "My undissuaded heart I hear Whisper courage in my ear," is exactly what I want for the thought, and to me seems very energetic as speech, if not as verse. Would "daring" be better than "courage"? *Je me le demande.* No, it would be ambiguous, as though I had used it licentiously for "daringly," and that would cloak the sense.

In short, your suggestions have broken the heart of the scald. He doesn't agree with them all; and those he does agree with, the spirit indeed is willing, but the d—d flesh cannot, cannot, cannot, see its way to profit by. I think I'll lay it by for nine years, like Horace. I think the well of Castaly's run out. No more the Muses round my pillow haunt. I am fallen once more to the mere proser. God bless you. R. L. S.

To Miss Jane Balfour

This correspondent, the long-lived spinster among the Balfour sisters (died 1907, aged 91) and the well-beloved "auntie" of a numerous clan of nephews and nieces, is the subject of the set of verses, *Auntie's Skirts*, in the *Child's Garden*. She had been reading *Travels with a Donkey* on its publication.

[*Swanston, June* 1879.]

MY DEAR AUNTIE,—If you could only think a little less of me and others, and a great deal more of your

delightful self, you would be as nearly perfect as there is any need to be. I think I have travelled with donkeys all my life; and the experience of this book could be nothing new to me. But if ever I knew a real donkey, I believe it is yourself. You are so eager to think well of everybody else (except when you are angry on account of some third person) that I do not believe you have ever left yourself time to think properly of yourself. You never understand when other people are unworthy, nor when you yourself are worthy in the highest degree. Oblige us all by having a guid conceit o' yoursel and despising in the future the whole crowd, including your affectionate nephew, R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

This letter is contemporary with the much-debated Cornhill essay *On some Aspects of Burns*, afterwards published in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*. "Meredith's story" is probably the *Tragic Comedians*.

Swanston, July 24, 1879.

MY DEAR GOSSE,—I have greatly enjoyed your article, which seems to me handsome in tone, and written like a fine old English gentleman. But is there not a hitch in the sentence at foot of page 153? I get lost in it.

Chapters VIII. and IX. of Meredith's story are very good, I think. But who wrote the review of my book? Whoever he was, he cannot write; he is humane, but a duffer; I could weep when I think of him; for surely to be virtuous and incompetent is a hard lot. I should prefer to be a bold pirate, the gay sailor-boy of immorality, and a publisher at once. My mind is extinct; my appetite is expiring; I have fallen altogether into a hollow-eyed, yawning way of life, like the parties in Burne Jones's pictures. . . . Talking of Burns. (Is this not sad, Weg? I use the term of reproach not because I am angry with you this time, but because I am angry with myself and desire to give pain.) Talking, I say, of Robert

Burns, the inspired poet is a very gay subject for study. I made a kind of chronological table of his various loves and lusts, and have been comparatively speechless ever since. I am sorry to say it, but there was something in him of the vulgar, bagmanlike, professional seducer.—Oblige me by taking down and reading, for the hundredth time, I hope, his *Twa Dogs* and his *Address to the Unco Guid.* I am only a Scotchman, after all, you see; and when I have beaten Burns, I am driven at once, by my parental feelings, to console him with a sugar-plum. But hang me if I know anything I like so well as the *Twa Dogs.* Even a common Englishman may have a glimpse, as it were from Pisgah, of its extraordinary merits.

"*English, The* :—a dull people, incapable of comprehending the Scottish tongue. Their history is so intimately connected with that of Scotland, that we must refer our readers to that heading. Their literature is principally the work of venal Scots."—Stevenson's *Handy Cyclopædia.* Glescow: Blaikie & Bannock.

Remember me in suitable fashion to Mrs. Gosse, the offspring, and the cat.—And believe me ever yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To SIDNEY COLVIN

Rembrandt refers to an article in the Edinburgh Review. "Bummkopf" was Stevenson's name for the typical pedant, German or other, who cannot clear his edifice of its scaffolding, nor set forth the results of research without intruding on the reader all its processes, evidences, and supports. *Burns* is the aforesaid Cornhill essay: not the rejected Encyclopædia article.

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh* [*July* 28, 1879].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I am just in the middle of your *Rembrandt.* The taste for Bummkopf and his works is agreeably dissembled so far as I have gone; and the reins have never for an instant been thrown upon the neck of that wooden Pegasus; he only perks up a learned snout from a footnote in the cellarage of a paragraph;

just, in short, where he ought to be, to inspire confidence in a wicked and adulterous generation. But, mind you, Bummkopf is not human ; he is Dagon the fish god, and down he will come, sprawling on his belly or his behind, with his hands broken from his helpless carcase, and his head rolling off into a corner. Up will rise on the other side, sane, pleasurable, human knowledge : a thing of beauty and a joy, etc.

I'm three parts through *Burns ;* long, dry, unsympathetic, but sound and, I think, in its dry way, interesting. Next I shall finish the story, and then perhaps Thoreau. Meredith has been staying with Morley, has been cracking me up, he writes, to that literary Robespierre ; and he (the L. R.) is about, it is believed, to write to me on a literary scheme. Is it Keats, hope you ? My heart leaps at the thought.—Yours ever, R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

With reference to the " term of reproach," it must be explained that Mr. Gosse, who now signs with only one initial, used in these days to sign with two, E. W. G. The nickname Weg was fastened on him by Stevenson, partly under a false impression as to the order of these initials, partly in friendly derision of a passing fit of lameness, which called up the memory of Silas Wegg, the immortal literary gentleman "*with* a wooden leg" of *Our Mutual Friend.*

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh* [*July* 29, 1879].

MY DEAR GOSSE,—Yours was delicious ; you are a young person of wit ; one of the last of them ; wit being quite out of date, and humour confined to the Scotch Church and the *Spectator* in unconscious survival. You will probably be glad to hear that I am up again in the world ; I have breathed again, and had a frolic on the strength of it. The frolic was yesterday, Sawbath ; the scene, the Royal Hotel, Bathgate ; I went there with a humorous friend to lunch. The maid soon showed herself a lass of character. She was looking out of window. On being asked what she was after, " I'm lookin' for my lad," says she. " Is that him ? " " Weel, I've been

lookin' for him a' my life, and I've never seen him yet," was the response. I wrote her some verses in the vernacular; she read them. "They're no bad for a beginner," said she. The landlord's daughter, Miss Stewart, was present in oil colour; so I wrote her a declaration in verse, and sent it by the handmaid. She (Miss S.) was present on the stair to witness our departure, in a warm, suffused condition. Damn it, Gosse, you needn't suppose that you're the only poet in the world.

Your statement about your initials, it will be seen, I pass over in contempt and silence. When once I have made up my mind, let me tell you, sir, there lives no pock-pudding who can change it. Your anger I defy. Your unmanly reference to a well-known statesman I puff from me, sir, like so much vapour. Weg is your name; Weg. W E G.

My enthusiasm has kind of dropped from me. I envy you your wife, your home, your child—I was going to say your cat. There would be cats in my home too if I could but get it. I may seem to you "the impersonation of life," but my life is the impersonation of waiting, and that's a poor creature. God help us all, and the deil be kind to the hindmost! Upon my word, we are a brave, cheery crew, we human beings, and my admiration increases daily—primarily for myself, but by a roundabout process for the whole crowd; for I dare say they have all their poor little secrets and anxieties. And here am I, for instance, writing to you as if you were in the seventh heaven, and yet I know you are in a sad anxiety yourself. I hope earnestly it will soon be over, and a fine pink Gosse sprawling in a tub, and a mother in the best of health and spirits, glad and tired, and with another interest in life. Man, you are out of the trouble when this is through. A first child is a rival, but a second is only a rival to the first; and the husband stands his ground and may keep married all his life—a consummation heartily to be desired. Good-bye, Gosse. Write me a witty letter with good news of the mistress. R. L. S.

V

THE AMATEUR EMIGRANT

S.S. DEVONIA—MONTEREY AND SAN FRANCISCO—MARRIAGE

July 1879–July 1880

In France, as has been already indicated, Stevenson had met the American lady, Mrs. Osbourne, who was afterwards to become his wife. Her domestic relations had not been fortunate; to his chivalrous nature her circumstances appealed no less than her person; and almost from their first meeting, which befell at Grez, immediately after the canoe voyage of 1876, he conceived for her an attachment which was to transform and determine his life. On her return to America with her children in the autumn of 1878, she determined to seek a divorce from her husband. Hearing of her intention, together with very disquieting news of her health, and hoping that after she had obtained the divorce he might make her his wife, Stevenson suddenly started for California at the beginning of August 1879.

For what he knew must seem to his friends, and especially to his father, so wild an errand, he would ask for no supplies from home; but resolved, risking his whole future on the issue, to test during this adventure his power of supporting himself, and eventually others, by his own labours in literature. In order from the outset to save as much as possible, he made the journey in

the steerage and the emigrant train. With this prime motive of economy was combined a second—that of learning for himself the pinch of life as it is felt by the unprivileged and the poor (he had long ago disclaimed for himself the character of a "consistent first-class passenger in life")—and also, it should be added, a third, that of turning his experiences to literary account. On board ship he took daily notes with this intent, and wrote moreover *The Story of a Lie* for an English magazine. Arrived at his destination, he found his health, as was natural, badly shaken by the hardships of the journey; tried his favourite open-air cure for three weeks at an Angora goat-ranche some twenty miles from Monterey; and then lived from September to December in that old Californian coast-town itself, under the conditions set forth in the earlier of the following letters, and under a heavy combined strain of personal anxiety and literary effort. From the notes taken on board ship and in the emigrant train he drafted an account of his journey, intending to make a volume matching in form, though in contents much unlike, the earlier *Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey*. He wrote also the essays on Thoreau and the Japanese reformer, Yoshida Torajiro, afterwards published in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books;* one of the most vivid of his shorter tales, *The Pavilion on the Links*, hereinafter referred to as a "blood and thunder," as well as a great part of another and longer story drawn from his new experiences and called *A Vendetta in the West;* but this did not satisfy him, and was never finished. He planned at the same time, in the spirit of romantic comedy, that tale which took final shape four years later as *Prince Otto*. Towards the end of December 1879 Stevenson moved to San Francisco, where

he lived for three months in a workman's lodging, leading a life of frugality amounting, it will be seen, to self-imposed penury, and working always with the same intensity of application, until his health utterly broke down. One of the causes which contributed to his illness was the fatigue he underwent in helping to watch beside the sickbed of a child, the son of his landlady. During a part of March and April he lay at death's door—his first really dangerous sickness since childhood—and was slowly tended back to life by the joint ministrations of his future wife and the physician to whom his letter of thanks will be found below. His marriage ensued in May 1880; immediately afterwards, to try and consolidate his recovery, he moved to a deserted mining-camp in the Californian coast range; and has recorded the aspects and humours of his life there with a master's touch in the *Silverado Squatters*.

The news of his dangerous illness and approaching marriage had in the meantime unlocked the parental heart and purse; supplies were sent ensuring his present comfort, with the promise of their continuance for the future, and of a cordial welcome for the new daughter-in-law in his father's house. The following letters, chosen from among those written during the period in question, depict his way of life, and reflect at once the anxiety of his friends and the strain of the time upon himself.

To Sidney Colvin

The story mentioned at the beginning of this letter is *The Story of a Lie*.

On board s.s. "Devonia," an hour or two out of New York [*August* 1879].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I have finished my story. The

handwriting is not good because of the ship's misconduct: thirty-one pages in ten days at sea is not bad.

I shall write a general procuration about this story on another bit of paper. I am not very well; bad food, bad air, and hard work have brought me down. But the spirits keep good. The voyage has been most interesting, and will make, if not a series of *Pall Mall* articles, at least the first part of a new book. The last weight on me has been trying to keep notes for this purpose. Indeed, I have worked like a horse, and am now as tired as a donkey. If I should have to push on far by rail, I shall bring nothing but my fine bones to port.

Good-bye to you all. I suppose it is now late afternoon with you and all across the seas. What shall I find over there? I dare not wonder.—Ever yours,

R. L. S.

P.S.—I go on my way to-night, if I can; if not, to-morrow; emigrant train ten to fourteen days' journey; warranted extreme discomfort. The only American institution which has yet won my respect is the rain. One sees it is a new country, they are so free with their water. I have been steadily drenched for twenty-four hours; water-proof wet through; immortal spirit fitfully blinking up in spite. Bought a copy of my own work, and the man said "by Stevenson."—"Indeed," says I.—"Yes, sir," says he.—Scene closes.

I am not beaten yet, though disappointed. If I am, it's for good this time; you know what "for good" means in my vocabulary—something inside of 12 months perhaps; but who knows? At least, if I fail in my great purpose, I shall see some wild life in the West and visit both Florida and Labrador ere I return. But I don't yet know if I have the courage to stick to life without it. Man, I was sick, sick, sick of this last year.

To Sidney Colvin

[*In the Emigrant Train from New York to San Francisco, August* 1879.]

DEAR COLVIN,—I am in the cars between Pittsburgh and Chicago, just now bowling through Ohio. I am taking charge of a kid, whose mother is asleep, with one eye, while I write you this with the other. I reached N.Y. Sunday night; and by five o'clock Monday was under way for the West. It is now about ten on Wednesday morning, so I have already been about forty hours in the cars. It is impossible to lie down in them, which must end by being very wearying.

I had no idea how easy it was to commit suicide. There seems nothing left of me; I died a while ago; I do not know who it is that is travelling.

Of where or how, I nothing know;
And why, I do not care;
Enough if, even so,
My travelling eyes, my travelling mind can go
By flood and field and hill, by wood and meadow fair,
Beside the Susquehannah and along the Delaware.

I think, I hope, I dream no more
The dreams of otherwhere,
The cherished thoughts of yore;
I have been changed from what I was before;
And drunk too deep perchance the lotus of the air
Beside the Susquehannah and along the Delaware.

Unweary God me yet shall bring
To lands of brighter air,
Where I, now half a king,
Shall with enfranchised spirit loudlier sing,
And wear a bolder front than that which now I wear
Beside the Susquehannah and along the Delaware.

Exit Muse, hurried by child's games. . . .

Have at you again, being now well through Indiana. In America you eat better than anywhere else: fact, The food is heavenly.

No man is any use until he has dared everything; I feel just now as if I had, and so might become a man. "If ye have faith like a grain of mustard seed." That is so true! Just now I have faith as big as a cigar-case; I will not say die, and do not fear man nor fortune.

R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

Crossing Nebraska [*Saturday, August* 23, 1879].

MY DEAR HENLEY,—I am sitting on the top of the cars with a mill party from Missouri going west for his health. Desolate flat prairie upon all hands. Here and there a herd of cattle, a yellow butterfly or two; a patch of wild sunflowers; a wooden house or two; then a wooden church alone in miles of waste; then a windmill to pump water. When we stop, which we do often, for emigrants and freight travel together, the kine first, the men after, the whole plain is heard singing with cicadae. This is a pause, as you may see from the writing. What happened to the old pedestrian emigrants, what was the tedium suffered by the Indians and trappers of our youth, the imagination trembles to conceive. This is now Saturday, 23rd, and I have been steadily travelling since I parted from you at St. Pancras. It is a strange vicissitude from the Savile Club to this; I sleep with a man from Pennsylvania who has been in the States Navy, and mess with him and the Missouri bird already alluded to. We have a tin wash-bowl among four. I wear nothing but a shirt and a pair of trousers, and never button my shirt. When I land for a meal, I pass my coat and feel dressed. This life is to last till Friday, Saturday, or Sunday next. It is a strange affair to be an emigrant, as

I hope you shall see in a future work. I wonder if this will be legible; my present station on the waggon roof, though airy compared to the cars, is both dirty and insecure. I can see the track straight before and straight behind me to either horizon. Peace of mind I enjoy with extreme serenity; I am doing right; I know no one will think so; and don't care. My body, however, is all to whistles; I don't eat; but, man, I can sleep. The car in front of mine is chock full of Chinese.

Monday.—What it is to be ill in an emigrant train let those declare who know. I slept none till late in the morning, overcome with laudanum, of which I had luckily a little bottle. All to-day I have eaten nothing, and only drunk two cups of tea, for each of which, on the pretext that the one was breakfast, and the other dinner, I was charged fifty cents. Our journey is through ghostly deserts, sage brush and alkali, and rocks, without form or colour, a sad corner of the world. I confess I am not jolly, but mighty calm, in my distresses. My illness is a subject of great mirth to some of my fellow-travellers, and I smile rather sickly at their jests.

We are going along Bitter Creek just now, a place infamous in the history of emigration, a place I shall remember myself among the blackest. I hope I may get this posted at Ogden, Utah. R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Coast Line Mountains, California, September*, 1879.]

Here is another curious start in my life. I am living at an Angora goat-ranche, in the Coast Line Mountains, eighteen miles from Monterey. I was camping out, but got so sick that the two rancheros took me in and tended me. One is an old bear-hunter, seventy-two years old, and a captain from the Mexican war; the other a pilgrim, and one who was out with the bear flag and under Fremont

when California was taken by the States. They are both true frontiersmen, and most kind and pleasant. Captain Smith, the bear-hunter, is my physician, and I obey him like an oracle.

The business of my life stands pretty nigh still. I work at my notes of the voyage. It will not be very like a book of mine; but perhaps none the less successful for that. I will not deny that I feel lonely to-day; but I do not fear to go on, for I am doing right. I have not yet had a word from England, partly, I suppose, because I have not yet written for my letters to New York; do not blame me for this neglect; if you knew all I have been through, you would wonder I had done so much as I have. I teach the ranche children reading in the morning, for the mother is from home sick.—Ever your affectionate friend, R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Monterey, California, October* 1879.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I received your letter with delight; it was the first word that reached me from the old country. I am in good health now; I have been pretty seedy, for I was exhausted by the journey and anxiety below even my point of keeping up; I am still a little weak, but that is all; I begin to ingrease,[1] it seems, already. My book is about half drafted: the *Amateur Emigrant*, that is. Can you find a better name? I believe it will be more popular than any of my others; the canvas is so much more popular and larger too. Fancy, it is my fourth. That voluminous writer. I was vexed to hear about the last chapter of *The Lie*, and pleased to hear about the rest; it would have been odd if it had no birthmark, born where and how it was. It should by rights have been called the *Devonia*, for that is the habit with all children born in a steerage.

[1] *Engraisser*, grow fat.

I write to you, hoping for more. Give me news of all who concern me, near or far, or big or little. Here, sir, in California you have a willing hearer.

Monterey is a place where there is no summer or winter, and pines and sand and distant hills and a bay all filled with real water from the Pacific. You will perceive that no expense has been spared. I now live with a little French doctor; I take one of my meals in a little French restaurant; for the other two, I sponge. The population of Monterey is about that of a dissenting chapel on a wet Sunday in a strong church neighbourhood. They are mostly Mexican and Indian—mixed.—Ever yours,

R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

Monterey, 8th October 1879.

MY DEAR WEG,—I know I am a rogue and the son of a dog. Yet let me tell you, when I came here I had a week's misery and a fortnight's illness, and since then I have been more or less busy in being content. This is a kind of excuse for my laziness. I hope you will not excuse yourself. My plans are still very uncertain, and it is not likely that anything will happen before Christmas. In the meanwhile, I believe I shall live on here "between the sandhills and the sea," as I think Mr. Swinburne hath it. I was pretty nearly slain; my spirit lay down and kicked for three days; I was up at an Angora goat-ranche in the Santa Lucia Mountains, nursed by an old frontiersman, a mighty hunter of bears, and I scarcely slept, or ate, or thought for four days. Two nights I lay out under a tree in a sort of stupor, doing nothing but fetch water for myself and horse, light a fire and make coffee, and all night awake hearing the goat-bells ringing and the tree-frogs singing when each new noise was enough to set me mad. Then the bear-hunter came round, pronounced me "real sick," and ordered me up to the ranche.

It was an odd, miserable piece of my life ; and according to all rule, it should have been my death ; but after a while my spirit got up again in a divine frenzy, and has since kicked and spurred my vile body forward with great emphasis and success.

My new book, *The Amateur Emigrant*, is about half drafted. I don't know if it will be good, but I think it ought to sell in spite of the deil and the publishers ; for it tells an odd enough experience, and one, I think, never yet told before. Look for my *Burns* in the Cornhill, and for my *Story of a Lie* in Paul's withered babe, the New Quarterly. You may have seen the latter ere this reaches you ; tell me if it has any interest, like a good boy, and remember that it was written at sea in great anxiety of mind. What is your news ? Send me your works, like an angel, *au fur et à mesure* of their apparation, for I am naturally short of literature, and I do not wish to rust.

I fear this can hardly be called a letter. To say truth, I feel already a difficulty of approach ; I do not know if I am the same man I was in Europe, perhaps I can hardly claim acquaintance with you. My head went round and looks another way now ; for when I found myself over here in a new land, and all the past uprooted in the one tug, and I neither feeling glad nor sorry, I got my last lesson about mankind ; I mean my latest lesson, for of course I do not know what surprises there are yet in store for me. But that I could have so felt astonished me beyond description. There is a wonderful callousness in human nature which enables us to live. I had no feeling one way or another from New York to California, until, at Dutch Flat, a mining camp in the Sierra, I heard a cock crowing with a home voice ; and then I fell to hope and regret both in the same moment.

Is there a boy or a girl ? and how is your wife ? I thought of you more than once, to put it mildly.

I live here comfortably enough ; but I shall soon be

left all alone, perhaps till Christmas. Then you may hope for correspondence—and may not I?—Your friend,

R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

[*Monterey, October* 1879.]

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Herewith the *Pavilion on the Links*, grand carpentry story in nine chapters, and I should hesitate to say how many tableaux. Where is it to go? God knows. It is the dibbs that are wanted. It is not bad, though I say it; carpentry, of course, but not bad at that; and who else can carpenter in England, now that Wilkie Collins is played out? It might be broken for magazine purposes at the end of Chapter IV. I send it to you, as I dare say Payn may help, if all else fails. Dibbs and speed are my mottoes.

Do acknowledge the *Pavilion* by return. I shall be so nervous till I hear, as of course I have no copy except of one or two places where the vein would not run. God prosper it, poor *Pavilion!* May it bring me money for myself and my sick one, who may read it, I do not know how soon.

Love to your wife, Anthony, and all. I shall write to Colvin to-day or to-morrow.—Yours ever, R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

The story spoken of in these letters as *A Vendetta in the West* was three parts written and then given up and destroyed.

[*Monterey, October* 1879.]

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Many thanks for your good letter, which is the best way to forgive you for your previous silence. I hope Colvin or somebody has sent me the Cornhill and the New Quarterly, though I am trying to get them in San Francisco. I think you might have sent me (1) some of your articles in the P. M. G.[1]; (2) a

[1] Pall Mall Gazette.

paper with the announcement of second edition; and (3) the announcement of the essays in Athenæum. This to prick you in the future. Again, choose, in your head, the best volume of Labiche there is, and post it to Jules Simoneau, Monterey, Monterey Co., California: do this at once, as he is my restaurant man, a most pleasant old boy with whom I discuss the universe and play chess daily. He has been out of France for thirty-five years, and never heard of Labiche. I have eighty-three pages written of a story called *A Vendetta in the West*, and about sixty pages of the first draft of the *Amateur Emigrant*. They should each cover from 130 to 150 pages when done. That is all my literary news. Do keep me posted, won't you? Your letter and Bob's made the fifth and sixth I have had from Europe in three months.

At times I get terribly frightened about my work, which seems to advance too slowly. I hope soon to have a greater burden to support, and must make money a great deal quicker than I used. I may get nothing for the *Vendetta;* I may only get some forty quid for the *Emigrant;* I cannot hope to have them both done much before the end of November.

O, and look here, why did you not send me the Spectator which slanged me? Rogues and rascals, is that all you are worth?

Yesterday I set fire to the forest, for which, had I been caught, I should have been hung out of hand to the nearest tree, Judge Lynch being an active person hereaway. You should have seen my retreat (which was entirely for strategical purposes). I ran like hell. It was a fine sight. At night I went out again to see it; it was a good fire, though I say it that should not. I had a near escape for my life with a revolver: I fired six charges, and the six bullets all remained in the barrel, which was choked from end to end, from muzzle to breach, with solid lead; it took a man three hours to

drill them out. Another shot, and I'd have gone to kingdom come.

This is a lovely place, which I am growing to love. The Pacific licks all other oceans out of hand; there is no place but the Pacific Coast to hear eternal roaring surf. When I get to the top of the woods behind Monterey, I can hear the seas breaking all round over ten or twelve miles of coast from near Carmel on my left, out to Point Pinas in front, and away to the right along the sands of Monterey to Castroville and the mouth of the Salinas. I was wishing yesterday that the world could get—no, what I mean was that you should be kept in suspense like Mahomet's coffin until the world had made half a revolution, then dropped here at the station as though you had stepped from the cars; you would then comfortably enter Walter's waggon (the sun has just gone down, the moon beginning to throw shadows, you hear the surf rolling, and smell the sea and the pines). That shall deposit you at Sanchez's saloon, where we take a drink; you are introduced to Bronson, the local editor ("I have no brain music," he says; "I'm a mechanic, you see," but he's a nice fellow); to Adolpho Sanchez, who is delightful. Meantime I go to the P. O. for my mail; thence we walk up Alvarado Street together, you now floundering in the sand, now merrily stumping on the wooden side-walks; I call at Hadsell's for my paper; at length behold us installed in Simoneau's little white-washed back-room, round a dirty tablecloth, with François the baker, perhaps an Italian fisherman, perhaps Augustin Dutra, and Simoneau himself. Simoneau, François, and I are the three sure cards; the others mere waifs. Then home to my great airy rooms with five windows opening on a balcony; I sleep on the floor in my camp blankets; you instal yourself abed; in the morning coffee with the little doctor and his little wife; we hire a waggon and make a day of it; and by night, I should let you up again into the air, to be returned to Mrs. Henley in the

forenoon following. By God, you would enjoy yourself. So should I. I have tales enough to keep you going till five in the morning, and then they would not be at an end. I forget if you asked me any questions, and I sent your letter up to the city to one who will like to read it. I expect other letters now steadily. If I have to wait another two months, I shall begin to be happy. Will you remember me most affectionately to your wife? Shake hands with Anthony from me; and God bless your mother.

God bless Stephen! Does he not know that I am a man, and cannot live by bread alone, but must have guineas into the bargain. *Burns*, I believe, in my own mind, is one of my high-water marks; Meiklejohn flames me a letter about it, which is so complimentary that I must keep it or get it published in the Monterey Californian. Some of these days I shall send an exemplaire of that paper; it is huge.—Ever your affectionate friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO SIDNEY COLVIN

Monterey, 21st October [1879].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Although you have absolutely disregarded my plaintive appeals for correspondence, and written only once as against God knows how many notes and notikins of mine—here goes again. I am now all alone in Monterey, a real inhabitant, with a box of my own at the P.O. I have splendid rooms at the doctor's, where I get coffee in the morning (the doctor is French), and I mess with another jolly old Frenchman, the stranded fifty-eight-year-old wreck of a good-hearted, dissipated, and once wealthy Nantais tradesman. My health goes on better; as for work, the draft of my book was laid aside at p. 68 or so; and I have now, by way of change, more than seventy pages of a novel, a one-volume novel, alas! to be called either *A Chapter in the Experience of Arizona*

Breckonridge or *A Vendetta in the West*, or a combination of the two. The scene from Chapter IV. to the end lies in Monterey and the adjacent country; of course, with my usual luck, the plot of the story is somewhat scandalous, containing an illegitimate father for piece of resistance. . . . Ever yours, R. L. S.

To P. G. Hamerton

The following refers to Mr. Hamerton's candidature, which was not successful, for the Professorship of Fine Art at Edinburgh :—

Monterey [*November* 1879].

MY DEAR MR. HAMERTON,—Your letter to my father was forwarded to me by mistake, and by mistake I opened it. The letter to myself has not yet reached me. This must explain my own and my father's silence. I shall write by this or next post to the only friends I have who, I think, would have an influence, as they are both professors. I regret exceedingly that I am not in Edinburgh, as I could perhaps have done more, and I need not tell you that what I might do for you in the matter of the election is neither from friendship nor gratitude, but because you are the only man (I beg your pardon) worth a damn. I shall write to a third friend, now I think of it, whose father will have great influence.

I find here (of all places in the world) your *Essays on Art*, which I have read with signal interest. I believe I shall dig an essay of my own out of one of them, for it set me thinking; if mine could only produce yet another in reply, we could have the marrow out between us.

I hope, my dear sir, you will not think badly of me for my long silence. My head has scarce been on my shoulders. I had scarce recovered from a long fit of useless ill-health than I was whirled over here double-quick time and by cheapest conveyance.

I have been since pretty ill, but pick up, though still somewhat of a mossy ruin. If you would view my coun-

tenance aright, come—view it by the pale moonlight. But that is on the mend. I believe I have now a distant claim to tan.

A letter will be more than welcome in this distant clime, where I have a box at the post-office—generally, I regret to say, empty. Could your recommendation introduce me to an American publisher? My next book I should really try to get hold of here, as its interest is international, and the more I am in this country the more I understand the weight of your influence. It is pleasant to be thus most at home abroad, above all, when the prophet is still not without honour in his own land. . . .

To Edmund Gosse

The copy of the Monterey paper here mentioned never came to hand, nor have the contributions of R. L. S. to that journal ever been traced.

Monterey, 15*th November* 1879.

MY DEAR GOSSE,—Your letter was to me such a bright spot that I answer it right away to the prejudice of other correspondents or -dants (don't know how to spell it) who have prior claims. . . . It is the history of our kindnesses that alone makes this world tolerable. If it were not for that, for the effect of kind words, kind looks, kind letters, multiplying, spreading, making one happy through another and bringing forth benefits, some thirty, some fifty, some a thousandfold, I should be tempted to think our life a practical jest in the worst possible spirit. So your four pages have confirmed my philosophy as well as consoled my heart in these ill hours.

Yes, you are right; Monterey is a pleasant place; but I see I can write no more to-night. I am tired and sad, and being already in bed, have no more to do but turn out the light.—Your affectionate friend, R. L. S.

I try it again by daylight. Once more in bed how-

ever; for to-day it is *mucho frio*, as we Spaniards say; and I had no other means of keeping warm for my work. I have done a good spell, 9½ foolscap pages; at least 8 of Cornhill; ah, if I thought that I could get eight guineas for it. My trouble is that I am all too ambitious just now. A book whereof 70 out of 120 are scrolled. A novel whereof 85 out of, say 140, are pretty well nigh done. A short story of 50 pp., which shall be finished to-morrow, or I'll know the reason why. This may bring in a lot of money: but I dread to think that it is all on three chances. If the three were to fail, I am in a bog. The novel is called *A Vendetta in the West*. I see I am in a grasping, dismal humour, and should, as we Americans put it, quit writing. In truth, I am so haunted by anxieties that one or other is sure to come up in all that I write.

I will send you herewith a Monterey paper where the works of R. L. S. appear, nor only that, but all my life on studying the advertisements will become clear. I lodge with Dr. Heintz; take my meals with Simoneau; have been only two days ago shaved by the tonsorial artist Michaels; drink daily at the Bohemia saloon; get my daily paper from Hadsell's; was stood a drink to-day by Albano Rodriguez; in short, there is scarce a person advertised in that paper but I know him, and I may add scarce a person in Monterey but is there advertised. The paper is the marrow of the place. Its bones—pooh, I am tired of writing so sillily. R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Monterey, December* 1879.]

To-day, my dear Colvin, I send you the first part of the *Amateur Emigrant*, 71 pp., by far the longest and the best of the whole. It is not a monument of eloquence; indeed, I have sought to be prosaic in view of the nature of the subject; but I almost think it is interesting.

Whatever is done about any book publication, two

things remember: I must keep a royalty; and, second, I must have all my books advertised, in the French manner, on the leaf opposite the title. I know from my own experience how much good this does an author with book *buyers*.

The entire *A. E.* will be a little longer than the two others, but not very much. Here and there, I fancy, you will laugh as you read it; but it seems to me rather a *clever* book than anything else: the book of a man, that is, who has paid a great deal of attention to contemporary life, and not through the newspapers.

I have never seen my *Burns!* the darling of my heart! I await your promised letter. Papers, magazines, articles by friends; reviews of myself, all would be very welcome. I am reporter for the Monterey Californian, at a salary of two dollars a week! *Comment trouvez-vous ça?* I am also in a conspiracy with the American editor, a French restaurant-man, and an Italian fisherman against the Padre. The enclosed poster is my last literary appearance. It was put up to the number of 200 exemplaires at the witching hour; and they were almost all destroyed by eight in the morning. But I think the nickname will stick. *Dos Reales; deux réaux;* two bits; twenty-five cents; about a shilling; but in practice it is worth from ninepence to threepence: thus two glasses of beer would cost two bits. The Italian fisherman, an old Garibaldian, is a splendid fellow. R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

The following is in acknowledgment of Mr. Gosse's volume called *New Poems*:—

Monterey, Dec. 8, 1879.

MY DEAR WEG,—I received your book last night as I lay abed with a pleurisy, the result, I fear, of overwork, gradual decline of appetite, etc. You know what a wooden-hearted curmudgeon I am about contemporary

verse. I like none of it, except some of my own. (I look back on that sentence with pleasure; it comes from an honest heart.) Hence you will be kind enough to take this from me in a kindly spirit; the piece "To my daughter" is delicious. And yet even here I am going to pick holes. I am a *beastly* curmudgeon. It is the last verse. "Newly budded" is off the venue; and haven't you gone ahead to make a poetry daybreak instead of sticking to your muttons, and comparing with the mysterious light of stars the plain, friendly, perspicuous, human day? But this is to be a beast. The little poem is eminently pleasant, human, and original.

I have read nearly the whole volume, and shall read it nearly all over again; you have no rivals!

Bancroft's *History of the United States*, even in a centenary edition, is essentially heavy fare; a little goes a long way; I respect Bancroft, but I do not love him; he has moments when he feels himself inspired to open up his improvisations upon universal history and the designs of God; but I flatter myself I am more nearly acquainted with the latter than Mr. Bancroft. A man, in the words of my Plymouth Brother, "who knows the Lord," must needs, from time to time, write less emphatically. It is a fetter dance to the music of minute guns—not at sea, but in a region not a thousand miles from the Sahara. Still, I am half-way through volume three, and shall count myself unworthy of the name of an Englishman if I do not see the back of volume six. The countryman of Livingstone, Burton, Speke, Drake, Cook, etc.!

I have been sweated not only out of my pleuritic fever, but out of all my eating cares, and the better part of my brains (strange coincidence!), by aconite. I have that peculiar and delicious sense of being born again in an expurgated edition which belongs to convalescence. It will not be for long; I hear the breakers roar; I shall be steering head first for another rapid before many days; *nitor aquis*, said a certain Eton boy, translating for his

sins a part of the *Inland Voyage* into Latin elegiacs; and from the hour I saw it, or rather a friend of mine, the admirable Jenkin, saw and recognised its absurd appropriateness, I took it for my device in life. I am going for thirty now; and unless I can snatch a little rest before long, I have, I may tell you in confidence, no hope of seeing thirty-one. My health began to break last winter, and has given me but fitful times since then. This pleurisy, though but a slight affair in itself, was a huge disappointment to me, and marked an epoch. To start a pleurisy about nothing, while leading a dull, regular life in a mild climate, was not my habit in past days; and it is six years, all but a few months, since I was obliged to spend twenty-four hours in bed. I may be wrong, but if the niting is to continue, I believe I must go. It is a pity in one sense, for I believe the class of work I *might* yet give out is better and more real and solid than people fancy. But death is no bad friend; a few aches and gasps, and we are done; like the truant child, I am beginning to grow weary and timid in this big jostling city, and could run to my nurse, even although she should have to whip me before putting me to bed.

Will you kiss your little daughter from me, and tell her that her father has written a delightful poem about her? Remember me, please, to Mrs. Gosse, to Middlemore, to whom some of these days I will write, to ——, to ——, yes, to ——, and to——. I know you will gnash your teeth at some of these; wicked, grim, catlike old poet. If I were God, I would sort you—as we say in Scotland.—Your sincere friend, R. L. S.

"Too young to be our child": blooming good.

To Sidney Colvin

Monterey [*December* 1879].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I have been down with pleurisy but now convalesce; it was a slight attack, but I had a

hot fever; pulse 150; and the thing reminds me of my weakness. These miseries tell on me cruelly. But things are not so hopeless as they might be so I am far from despair. Besides I think I may say I have some courage for life.

But now look here:

Fables and Tales

Story of a Lie . . .	100	pp. like the Donkey.
Providence and the Guitar .	52	
Will o' the Mill . . .	45	
A Lodging for the Night .	40	(about)
Sieur de Malétroit's Door .	42	
	say 280	pp. in all.

Here is my scheme. Henley already proposed that Caldecott should illustrate *Will o' the Mill.* The *Guitar* is still more suited to him; he should make delicious things for that. And though the *Lie* is not much in the way for pictures, I should like to see my dear Admiral in the flesh. I love the Admiral; I give my head, that man's alive. As for the other two they need not be illustrated at all unless he likes.

Is this a dream altogether? I would if necessary ask nothing down for the stories, and only a small royalty but to begin *from the first copy sold.*

I hate myself for being always on business. But I cannot help my fears and anxieties about money; even if all came well, it would be many a long day before we could afford to leave this coast. Is it true that the *Donkey* is in a second edition? That should bring some money, too, ere long, though not much I dare say. You will see the *Guitar* is made for Caldecott; moreover it's a little thing I like. I am no lover of either of the things in Temple Bar; but they will make up the volume, and perhaps others may like them better than I do. They say republished stories do not sell. Well, that is why I

am in a hurry to get this out. The public must be educated to buy mine or I shall never make a cent. I have heaps of short stories in view. The next volume will probably be called *Stories* or *A Story-Book*, and contain quite a different lot: *The Pavilion on the Links: Professor Rensselaer: The Dead Man's Letter: The Wild Man of the Woods: The Devil on Cramond Sands.* They would all be carpentry stories; pretty grim for the most part; but of course that's all in the air as yet.—Yours ever,

R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

Monterey, December 11th, 1879.

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Many, many thanks for your long letter. And now to rectifications:—

1. You are wrong about the *Lie*, from choosing a wrong standard. Compare it with my former stories, not with Scott, or Fielding, or Balzac, or Charles Reade, or even Wilkie Collins; and where will you find anything half or a tenth part as good as the Admiral, or even Dick, or even the Squire, or even Esther. If you had thought of that, you would have complimented me for advance. But you were not quite sincere with yourself: you were seeking arguments to make me devote myself to plays, unbeknown, of course, to yourself.

2. Plays, dear boy, are madness for me just now. The best play is hopeless before six months, and more likely eighteen for outsiders like you and me. And understand me, I have to get money *soon*, or it has no further interest for me; I am nearly through my capital; with what pluck I can muster against great anxieties and in a very shattered state of health, I am trying to do things that will bring in money soon; and I could not, if I were not mad, step out of my way to work at what might perhaps bring me in more but months ahead. Journalism, you know well, is not my forte; yet if I could only get

a roving commission from a paper, I should leap at it and send them goodish (no more than that) goodish stuff.

As for my poor literature, dear Henley, you must expect for a time to find it worse and worse. Perhaps, if God favours me a little at last, it will pick up again. Now I am fighting with both hands, a hard battle, and my work, while it will be as good as I can make it, will probably be worth twopence. If you despised the *Donkey*, dear boy, you should have told me so at the time, not reserved it for a sudden revelation just now when I am down in health, wealth, and fortune. But I am glad you have said so at last. Never, please, delay such confidences any more. If they come quickly, they are a help ; if they come after long silence, they feel almost like a taunt.

Now, to read all this, any one would think you had written unkindly, which is not so, as God who made us knows. But I wished to put myself right ere I went on to state myself. Nothing has come but the volume of Labiche ; the *Burns* I have now given up ; the P.O. authorities plainly regard it as contraband ; make no further efforts in that direction. But, please, if anything else of mine appears, *see that my people have a copy.* I hoped and supposed my own copy would go as usual to the old address, and, let me use Scotch, I was fair affrontit when I found this had not been done.

You have not told me how you are and I heard you had not been well. Please remedy this.

The end of life ? Yes, Henley, I can tell you what that is. How old are all truths, and yet how far from commonplace ; old, strange, and inexplicable, like the Sphinx. So I learn day by day the value and high doctrinality of suffering. Let me suffer always ; not more than I am able to bear, for that makes a man mad, as hunger drives the wolf to sally from the forest ; but still to suffer some, and never to sink up to my eyes in comfort and grow dead in virtues and respectability. I am a bad man by nature, I suppose ; but I cannot be good without

suffering a little. And the end of life, you will ask? The pleasurable death of self: a thing not to be attained, because it is a thing belonging to Heaven. All this apropos of that good, weak, feverish, fine spirit, —— ——. We have traits in common; we have almost the same strength and weakness intermingled; and if I had not come through a very hot crucible, I should be just as feverish. My sufferings have been healthier than his; mine have been always a choice, where a man could be manly; his have been so too, if he knew it, but were not so upon the face; hence a morbid strain, which his wounded vanity has helped to embitter.

I wonder why I scratch every one to-day. And I believe it is because I am conscious of so much truth in your strictures on my damned stuff. I don't care; there is something in me worth saying, though I can't find what it is just yet; and ere I die, if I do not die too fast, I shall write something worth the boards, which with scarce an exception I have not yet done. At the same time, dear boy, in a matter of vastly more importance than Opera Omnia Ludovici Stevenson, I mean my life, I have not been a perfect cad; God help me to be less and less so as the days go on.

The *Emigrant* is not good, and will never do for P.M.G., though it must have a kind of rude interest. R. L. S.

I am now quite an American—yellow envelopes.

To Sidney Colvin

608 *Bush Street, San Francisco*
[*December* 26, 1879].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I am now writing to you in a café waiting for some music to begin. For four days I have spoken to no one but to my landlady or landlord or to restaurant waiters. This is not a gay way to pass Christmas, is it? and I must own the guts are a little knocked

out of me. If I could work, I could worry through better. But I have no style at command for the moment, with the second part of the *Emigrant*, the last of the novel, the essay on Thoreau, and God knows all, waiting for me. But I trust something can be done with the first part, or, by God, I'll starve here. . . .[1]

O Colvin, you don't know how much good I have done myself. I feared to think this out by myself. I have made a base use of you, and it comes out so much better than I had dreamed. But I have to stick to work now; and here's December gone pretty near useless. But, Lord love you, October and November saw a great harvest. It might have affected the price of paper on the Pacific coast. As for ink, they haven't any, not what I call ink; only stuff to write cookery-books with, or the works of Hayley, or the pallid perambulations of the —I can find nobody to beat Hayley. I like good, knock-me-down black-strap to write with; that makes a mark and done with it.—By the way, I have tried to read the *Spectator*,[2] which they all say I imitate, and—it's very wrong of me, I know—but I can't. It's all very fine, you know, and all that, but it's vapid. They have just played the overture to *Norma*, and I know it's a good one, for I bitterly wanted the opera to go on; I had just got thoroughly interested—and then no curtain to rise.

I have written myself into a kind of spirits, bless your dear heart, by your leave. But this is wild work for me, nearly nine and me not back! What will Mrs. Carson think of me! Quite a night-hawk, I do declare. You are the worst correspondent in the world—no, not that, Henley is that—well, I don't know, I leave the pair of you to him that made you—surely with small attention. But here's my service, and I'll away home to my den O! much the better for this crack, Professor Colvin.

R. L. S.

[1] Here follows a long calculation of ways and means.
[2] Addison's.

To Sidney Colvin

608 *Bush Street, San Francisco*
[*January* 10, 1880].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—This is a circular letter to tell my estate fully. You have no right to it, being the worst of correspondents; but I wish to efface the impression of my last, so to you it goes.

Any time between eight and half-past nine in the morning, a slender gentleman in an ulster, with a volume buttoned into the breast of it, may be observed leaving No. 608 Bush and descending Powell with an active step. The gentleman is R. L. S.; the volume relates to Benjamin Franklin, on whom he meditates one of his charming essays. He descends Powell, crosses Market, and descends in Sixth on a branch of the original Pine Street Coffee House, no less; I believe he would be capable of going to the original itself, if he could only find it. In the branch he seats himself at a table covered with wax-cloth, and a pampered menial, of High-Dutch extraction and, indeed, as yet only partially extracted, lays before him a cup of coffee, a roll and a pat of butter, all, to quote the deity, very good. A while ago and R. L. S. used to find the supply of butter insufficient; but he has now learned the art to exactitude, and butter and roll expire at the same moment. For this refection he pays ten cents, or five pence sterling (£0, 0s. 5d.).

Half an hour later, the inhabitants of Bush Street observe the same slender gentleman armed, like George Washington, with his little hatchet, splitting, kindling, and breaking coal for his fire. He does this quasi-publicly upon the window-sill; but this is not to be attributed to any love of notoriety, though he is indeed vain of his prowess with the hatchet (which he persists in calling an axe), and daily surprised at the perpetuation of his fingers. The reason is this: that the sill is a strong, supporting

beam, and that blows of the same emphasis in other parts of his room might knock the entire shanty into hell. Thenceforth, for from three to four hours, he is engaged darkly with an ink bottle. Yet he is not blacking his boots, for the only pair that he possesses are innocent of lustre and wear the natural hue of the material turned up with caked and venerable slush. The youngest child of his landlady remarks several times a day, as this strange occupant enters or quits the house, "Dere's de author." Can it be that this bright-haired innocent has found the true clue to the mystery? The being in question is, at least, poor enough to belong to that honourable craft.

His next appearance is at the restaurant of one Donadieu, in Bush Street, between Dupont and Kearney, where a copious meal, half a bottle of wine, coffee and brandy may be procured for the sum of four bits, *alias* fifty cents, £0, 2s. 2d. sterling. The wine is put down in a whole bottleful, and it is strange and painful to observe the greed with which the gentleman in question seeks to secure the last drop of his allotted half, and the scrupulousness with which he seeks to avoid taking the first drop of the other. This is partly explained by the fact that if he were to go over the mark—bang would go a tenpence. He is again armed with a book, but his best friends will learn with pain that he seems at this hour to have deserted the more serious studies of the morning. When last observed, he was studying with apparent zest the exploits of one Rocambole by the late Viscomte Ponson du Terrail. This work, originally of prodigious dimensions, he had cut into liths or thicknesses apparently for convenience of carriage.

Then the being walks, where is not certain. But by about half-past four, a light beams from the windows of 608 Bush, and he may be observed sometimes engaged in correspondence, sometimes once again plunged in the mysterious rites of the forenoon. About six he returns to the Branch Original, where he once more imbrues himself

to the worth of fivepence in coffee and roll. The evening is devoted to writing and reading, and by eleven or half-past darkness closes over this weird and truculent existence.

As for coin, you see I don't spend much, only you and Henley both seem to think my work rather bosh nowadays, and I do want to make as much as I was making, that is £200; if I can do that, I can swim: last year with my ill health I touched only £109; that would not do, I could not fight it through on that; but on £200, as I say, I am good for the world, and can even in this quiet way save a little, and that I must do. The worst is my health; it is suspected I had an ague chill yesterday; I shall know by to-morrow, and you know if I am to be laid down with ague the game is pretty well lost. But I don't know; I managed to write a good deal down in Monterey, when I was pretty sickly most of the time, and, by God, I'll try, ague and all. I have to ask you frankly, when you write, to give me any good news you can, and chat a little, but *just in the meantime*, give me no bad. If I could get *Thoreau*, *Emigrant* and *Vendetta* all finished and out of my hand, I should feel like a man who had made half a year's income in a half year; but until the two last are *finished*, you see, they don't fairly count.

I am afraid I bore you sadly with this perpetual talk about my affairs; I will try and stow it; but you see, it touches me nearly. I'm the miser in earnest now: last night, when I felt so ill, the supposed ague chill, it seemed strange not to be able to afford a drink. I would have walked half a mile, tired as I felt, for a brandy and soda. —Ever yours, R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

608 *Bush Street*,
San Francisco, *January* 1880.

MY DEAR HENLEY,—You have got a letter ahead of me, owing to the Alpine accumulation of ill news I had

to stagger under. I will stand no complaints of my correspondence from England, I having written near half as many letters again as I have received.

Do not damp me about my work; *qu'elle soit bonne ou mauvaise*, it has to be done. You know the wolf is at the door, and I have been seriously ill. I am now at Thoreau. I almost blame myself for persevering in anything so difficult under the circumstances: but it may set me up again in style, which is the great point. I have now £80 in the world and two houses to keep up for an indefinite period. It is odd to be on so strict a regimen; it is a week for instance since I have bought myself a drink, and unless times change, I do not suppose I shall ever buy myself another. The health improves. The Pied Piper is an idea; it shall have my thoughts, and so shall you. The character of the P. P. would be highly comic, I seem to see. Had you looked at the *Pavilion*, I do not think you would have sent it to Stephen; 'tis a mere story, and has no higher pretension: Dibbs is its name, I wish it was its nature also. The *Vendetta*, at which you ignorantly puff out your lips, is a real novel, though not a good one. As soon as I have found strength to finish the *Emigrant*, I shall also finish the *Vend.* and draw a breath—I wish I could say, "and draw a cheque." My spirits have risen *contra fortunam;* I will fight this out, and conquer. You are all anxious to have me home in a hurry. There are two or three objections to that; but I shall instruct you more at large when I have time, for to-day I am hunted, having a pile of letters before me. Yet it is already drawing into dusk.—Yours affectionately,

R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

The Dook de Karneel (= Cornhill) and Marky de Stephen is of course Mr. Leslie Stephen. The "blood and thunder" is *The Pavilion on the Links*. *Hester Noble* and *Don Juan* were the titles of two plays planned and begun with W. E. Henley the previous

winter. They were never finished. The French novels mentioned are by Joseph Méry. The *Dialogue on Character and Destiny* still exists in a fragmentary condition. George the Pieman is a character in *Deacon Brodie.*

608 *Bush Street, San Francisco,*
January 23rd, 1880.

MY DEAR HENLEY,—That was good news. The Dook de Karneel, K.C.B., taken a blood and thunder! Well, I *thought* it had points; now, I know it. And I'm to see a proof once more! O Glory Hallelujah, how beautiful is proof, And how distressed that author man who dwells too far aloof. His favourite words he always finds his friends misunderstand, With oaths, he reads his articles, moist brow and clenchéd hand. Impromtoo. The last line first-rate. When may I hope to see the *Deacon?* I pine for the *Deacon,* for proofs of the *Pavilion*—O and for a categorical confession from you that the second edition of the *Donkey* was a false alarm, which I conclude from hearing no more.

I have twice written to the Marky de Stephen; each time with one of my bright papers, so I should hear from him soon. How are Baron Payn, Sir Robert de Bob, and other members of the Aristocracy?

Here's breid an' wine an' kebbuck an' canty cracks at e'en
To the folks that mind o' me when I'm awa',
But them that hae forgot me, O ne'er to be forgi'en—
They may a' gae tapsalteerie in a raw!

I have mighty little to say, dear boy, to seem worth 2½d. I have thought of the Piper, but he does not seem to come as yet; I get him too metaphysical. I shall make a shot for *Hester,* as soon as I have finished the *Emigrant* and the *Vendetta* and perhaps my *Dialogue on Character and Destiny.* Hester and Don Juan are the two that smile on me; but I will touch nothing in the shape of a play until I have made my year's income sure. You understand, and you see that I am right?

I have read *M. Auguste* and the *Crime inconnu*, being now abonné to a library, and found them very readable, highly ingenious, and so French that I could not keep my gravity. The *Damned Ones of the Indies* now occupy my attention; I have myself already damned them repeatedly. I am, as you know, the original person the wheels of whose chariot tarried; but though I am so slow, I am rootedly tenacious. Do not despair. *Hester* and the *Don* are sworn in my soul; and they shall be.

Is there no *news?* Real news, newsy news. Heavenly blue, this is strange. Remember me to the lady of the Cawstle, my toolip, and ever was,

GEORGE THE PIEMAN.

To Sidney Colvin

With reference to the following, it must be explained that the first draft of the first part of the *Amateur Emigrant*, when it reached me about Christmas, had seemed to me, compared to his previous travel papers, a somewhat wordy and spiritless record of squalid experiences, little likely to advance his still only half-established reputation; and I had written to him to that effect, inopportunely enough, with a fuller measure even than usual of the frankness which always marked our intercourse.

608 *Bush Street, San Francisco, California* [*January* 1880].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I received this morning your long letter from Paris. Well, God's will be done; if it's dull, it's dull; it was a fair fight, and it's lost, and there's an end. But, fortunately, dulness is not a fault the public hates; perhaps they may like this vein of dulness. If they don't, damn them, we'll try them with another. I sat down on the back of your letter, and wrote twelve Cornhill pages this day as ever was of that same despised *Emigrant;* so you see my moral courage has not gone down with my intellect. Only, frankly, Colvin, do you think it a good plan to be so eminently descriptive, and even eloquent in dispraise? You rolled such a lot of

polysyllables over me that a better man than I might have been disheartened.—However, I was not, as you see, and am not. The *Emigrant* shall be finished and leave in the course of next week. And then, I'll stick to stories. I am not frightened. I know my mind is changing; I have been telling you so for long; and I suppose I am fumbling for the new vein. Well, I'll find it.

The *Vendetta* you will not much like, I dare say: and that must be finished next; but I'll knock you with *The Forest State: A Romance.*

I'm vexed about my letters; I know it is painful to get these unsatisfactory things; but at least I have written often enough. And not one soul ever gives me any *news*, about people or things; everybody writes me sermons; it's good for me, but hardly the food necessary for a man who lives all alone on forty-five cents a day, and sometimes less, with quantities of hard work and many heavy thoughts. If one of you could write me a letter with a jest in it, a letter like what is written to real people in this world—I am still flesh and blood—I should enjoy it. Simpson did, the other day, and it did me as much good as a bottle of wine. A lonely man gets to feel like a pariah after awhile—or no, not that, but like a saint and martyr, or a kind of macerated clergyman with pebbles in his boots, a pillared Simeon, I'm damned if I know what, but, man alive, I want gossip.

My health is better, my spirits steadier, I am not the least cast down. If the *Emigrant* was a failure, the *Pavilion*, by your leave, was not: it was a story quite adequately and rightly done, I contend; and when I find Stephen, for whom certainly I did not mean it, taking it in, I am better pleased with it than before. I know I shall do better work than ever I have done before; but, mind you, it will not be like it. My sympathies and interests are changed. There shall be no more books of travel for me. I care for nothing but the moral and the dramatic, not a jot for the picturesque or the beautiful,

other than about people. It bored me hellishly to write the *Emigrant;* well, it's going to bore others to read it; that's only fair.

I should also write to others; but indeed I am jack-tired, and must go to bed to a French novel to compose myself for slumber.—Ever your affectionate friend,

R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

608 *Bush Street, San Francisco, California, Jan.* 23, 1880.

MY DEAR AND KIND WEG,—It was a lesson in philosophy that would have moved a bear, to receive your letter in my present temper. For I am now well and well at my ease, both by comparison. First, my health has turned a corner; it was not consumption this time, though consumption it has to be some time, as all my kind friends sing to me, day in, day out. Consumption! how I hate that word; yet it can sound innocent, as, *e.g.*, consumption of military stores. What was wrong with me, apart from colds and little pleuritic flea-bites, was a lingering malaria; and that is now greatly overcome. I eat once more, which is a great amusement and, they say, good for the health. Second, many of the thunder-clouds that were overhanging me when last I wrote, have silently stolen away like Longfellow's Arabs: and I am now engaged to be married to the woman whom I have loved for three years and a half. I do not yet know when the marriage can come off; for there are many reasons for delay. But as few people before marriage have known each other so long or made more trials of each other's tenderness and constancy, I permit myself to hope some quiet at the end of all. At least I will boast myself so far; I do not think many wives are better loved than mine will be. Third and last, in the order of what has changed my feelings, my people have cast

me off, and so that thundercloud, as you may almost say, has overblown. You know more than most people whether or not I loved my father.[1] These things are sad; nor can any man forgive himself for bringing them about; yet they are easier to meet in fact than by anticipation. I almost trembled whether I was doing right, until I was fairly summoned; then, when I found that I was not shaken one jot, that I could grieve, that I could sharply blame myself, for the past, and yet never hesitate one second as to my conduct in the future, I believed my cause was just and I leave it with the Lord. I certainly look for no reward, nor any abiding city either here or hereafter, but I please myself with hoping that my father will not always think so badly of my conduct nor so very slightingly of my affection as he does at present.

You may now understand that the quiet economical citizen of San Francisco who now addresses you, a bonhomme given to cheap living, early to bed though scarce

[1] In reference to the father's estrangement at this time, Sir James Dewar, an old friend of the elder Stevenson, tells a story which would have touched R. L. S. infinitely had he heard it. Sir James (then Professor) Dewar and Mr. Thomas Stevenson were engaged together on some official scientific work near Duns in Berwickshire. "Spending the evening together," writes Sir James, "at an hotel in Berwick-on-Tweed, the two, after a long day's work, fell into close fireside talk over their toddy, and Mr. Stevenson opened his heart upon what was to him a very sore grievance. He spoke with anger and dismay of his son's journey and intentions, his desertion of the old firm, and taking to the devious and barren paths of literature. The Professor took up the cudgels in the son's defence, and at last, by way of ending the argument, half jocularly offered to wager that in ten years from that moment R. L. S. would be earning a bigger income than the old firm had ever commanded. To his surprise, the father became furious, and repulsed all attempts at reconciliation. But six and a half years later, Mr. Stevenson, broken in health, came to London to seek medical advice, and although so feeble that he had to be lifted out and into his cab, called at the Royal Institute to see the Professor. He said: "I am here to consult a doctor, but I couldna be in London without coming to shake your hand and confess that you were richt after a' about Louis, and I was wrang." The frail old frame shook with emotion, and he muttered, "I ken this is my last visit to the south." A few weeks later he was dead.

early to rise in proportion (que diable! let us have style, anyway), busied with his little bits of books and essays and with a fair hope for the future, is no longer the same desponding, invalid son of a doubt and an apprehension who last wrote to you from Monterey. I am none the less warmly obliged to you and Mrs. Gosse for your good words. I suppose that I am the devil (hearing it so often), but I am not ungrateful. Only please, Weg, do not talk of genius about me; I do not think I want for a certain talent, but I am heartily persuaded I have none of the other commodity; so let that stick to the wall: you only shame me by such friendly exaggerations.

When shall I be married? When shall I be able to return to England? When shall I join the good and blessed in a forced march upon the New Jerusalem? That is what I know not in any degree; some of them, let us hope, will come early, some after a judicious interval. I have three little strangers knocking at the door of Leslie Stephen: *The Pavilion on the Links*, a blood and thunder story, *accepted; Yoshida Torajiro*, a paper on a Japanese hero who will warm your blood, *postulant;* and *Henry David Thoreau: his character and opinions*—postulant also. I give you these hints knowing you to love the best literature, that you may keep an eye at the mast-head for these little tit-bits. Write again, and soon, and at greater length to your friend.—Your friend, (signed) R. L. S.

To Charles Baxter

608 *Bush Street, San Francisco, Jan.* 26, '80.

MY DEAR CHARLES,—I have to drop from a 50 cent to a 25 cent dinner; to-day begins my fall. That brings down my outlay in food and drink to 45 cents or 1s. 10½d. per day. How are the mighty fallen! Luckily, this is such a cheap place for food; I used to pay as much as that for my first breakfast in the Savile in the grand old palmy days of yore. I regret nothing, and do not even

dislike these straits, though the flesh will rebel on occasion. It is to-day bitter cold, after weeks of lovely warm weather, and I am all in a chitter. I am about to issue for my little shilling and halfpenny meal, taken in the middle of the day, the poor man's hour; and I shall eat and drink to your prosperity.—Ever yours,

R. L. S.

To Professor Meiklejohn

One day at the Savile Club, Stevenson, hearing a certain laugh, cried out that he must know the laugher, who turned out to be a fellow-countryman, the late John Meiklejohn, the well-known educational authority and professor at St. Andrews University. Stevenson introduced himself, and the two became firm friends. Allusion was made a few pages back to a letter from Professor Meiklejohn about the *Burns* essay.

608 *Bush Street, San Francisco, California, Feb. 1st,* 1880.

MY DEAR MEIKLEJOHN,—You must think me a thankless fellow by this time; but if you knew how harassed and how sick I had been, and how I have twice begun to write to you already, you might condescend to forgive the puir gangrel body. To tell you what I have been doing, thinking, and coming through these six or seven months would exhilarate nobody: least of all me. *Infandum jubes,* so I hope you won't. I have done a great deal of work, but perhaps my health of mind and body should not let me expect much from what I have done. At least I have turned the corner; my feet are on the rock again, I believe, and I shall continue to pour forth pure and wholesome literature for the masses as per invoice.

I am glad you liked *Burns;* I think it is the best thing I ever did. Did not the national vanity exclaim? Do you know what Shairp thought? I think I let him down gently, did I not?

I have done a *Thoreau,* which I hope you may like,

though I have a feeling that perhaps it might be better. Please look out for a little paper called *Yoshida Torajiro*, which, I hope, will appear in Cornhill ere very long; the subject, at least, will interest you. I am to appear in the same magazine with a real "blood and bones in the name of God" story. Why Stephen took it, is to me a mystery; anyhow, it was fun to write, and if you can interest a person for an hour and a half, you have not been idle. When I suffer in mind, stories are my refuge; I take them like opium; and I consider one who writes them as a sort of doctor of the mind. And frankly, Meiklejohn, it is not Shakespeare we take to, when we are in a hot corner; nor, certainly, George Eliot—no, nor even Balzac. It is Charles Reade, or old Dumas, or the Arabian Nights, or the best of Walter Scott; it is stories we want, not the high poetic function which represents the world; we are then like the Asiatic with his improvisatore or the middle-agee with his trouvère. We want incident, interest, action: to the devil with your philosophy. When we are well again, and have an easy mind, we shall peruse your important work; but what we want now is a drug. So I, when I am ready to go beside myself, stick my head into a story-book, as the ostrich with her bush; let fate and fortune meantime belabour my posteriors at their will.

I have not seen the Spectator article; nobody sent it to me. If you had an old copy lying by you, you would be very good to despatch it to me. A little abuse from my grandmamma would do me good in health, if not in morals.

This is merely to shake hands with you and give you the top of the morning in 1880. But I look to be answered; and then I shall promise to answer in return. For I am now, so far as that can be in this world, my own man again, and when I have heard from you, I shall be able to write more naturally and at length.

At least, my dear Meiklejohn, I hope you will believe

in the sincerely warm and friendly regard in which I hold you, and the pleasure with which I look forward, not only to hearing from you shortly, but to seeing you again in the flesh with another good luncheon and good talk. Tell me when you don't like my work.—Your friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To W. E. HENLEY

The essays here mentioned on Benjamin Franklin and William Penn were projects long cherished but in the end abandoned: *The Forest State* came to maturity three years later as *Prince Otto.*

608 *Bush Street, San Francisco, Cal., February* 1880.

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Before my work or anything I sit down to answer your long and kind letter.

I am well, cheerful, busy, hopeful; I cannot be knocked down; I do not mind about the *Emigrant.* I never thought it a masterpiece. It was written to sell, and I believe it will sell; and if it does not, the next will. You need not be uneasy about my work; I am only beginning to see my true method.

(1) As to *Studies.* There are two more already gone to Stephen. *Yoshida Torajiro,* which I think temperate and adequate; and *Thoreau,* which will want a really Balzacian effort over the proofs. But I want *Benjamin Franklin and the Art of Virtue* to follow; and perhaps also *William Penn,* but this last may be perhaps delayed for another volume—I think not, though. The *Studies* will be an intelligent volume, and in their latter numbers more like what I mean to be my style, or I mean what my style means to be, for I am passive. (2) The Essays. Good news indeed. I think *Ordered South* must be thrown in. It always swells the volume, and it will never find a more appropriate place. It was May 1874, Macmillan, I believe. (3) Plays. I did not understand you meant to try the draft. I shall make you a full scenario as

soon as the *Emigrant* is done. (4) *Emigrant.* He shall be sent off next week. (5) Stories. You need not be alarmed that I am going to imitate Meredith. You know I was a story-teller ingrain; did not that reassure you? The *Vendetta,* which falls next to be finished, is not entirely pleasant. But it has points. *The Forest State* or *The Greenwood State: A Romance,* is another pair of shoes. It is my old Semiramis, our half-seen Duke and Duchess, which suddenly sprang into sunshine clearness as a story the other day. The kind, happy *dénouement* is unfortunately absolutely undramatic, which will be our only trouble in quarrying out the play. I mean we shall quarry from it. *Characters*—Otto Frederick John, hereditary Prince of Grünwald; Amelia Seraphina, Princess; Conrad, Baron Gondremarck, Prime Minister; Cancellarius Greisengesang; Killian Gottesacker, Steward of the River Farm; Ottilie, his daughter; the Countess von Rosen. Seven in all. A brave story, I swear; and a brave play too, if we can find the trick to make the end. The play, I fear, will have to end darkly, and that spoils the quality as I now see it of a kind of crockery, eighteenth century, high-life-below-stairs life, breaking up like ice in spring before the nature and the certain modicum of manhood of my poor, clever, feather-headed Prince, whom I love already. I see Seraphina too. Gondremarck is not quite so clear. The Countess von Rosen, I have; I'll never tell you who she is; it's a secret; but I have known the countess; well, I will tell you; it's my old Russian friend, Madame Zassetsky. Certain scenes are, in conception, the best I have ever made, except for *Hester Noble.* Those at the end, Von Rosen and the Princess, the Prince and Princess, and the Princess and Gondremarck, as I now see them from here, should be nuts, Henley, nuts. It irks me not to go to them straight. But the *Emigrant* stops the way; then a reassured scenario for *Hester;* then the *Vendetta;* then two (or three) essays—*Benjamin Franklin, Thoughts on Literature*

as an Art, Dialogue on Character and Destiny between two Puppets, The Human Compromise; and then, at length—come to me, my Prince. O Lord, it's going to be courtly! And there is not an ugly person nor an ugly scene in it. The *Slate* both Fanny and I have damned utterly; it is too morbid, ugly, and unkind; better starvation.

R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

I had written proposing that a collected volume of his short stories should be published with illustrations by Caldecott. At the end of this letter occurs his first allusion to his now famous *Requiem.*

[608 *Bush Street,*
San Francisco, February 1880.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I received a very nice letter from you with two enclosures. I am still unable to finish the *Emigrant,* although there are only some fifteen pages to do. The *Vendetta* is, I am afraid, scarce Fortnightly form, though after the *Pavilion* being taken by Stephen, I am truly at sea about all such matters. I dare say my *Prince of Grünewald*—the name still uncertain—would be good enough for anything if I could but get it done: I believe that to be a really good story. The *Vendetta* is somewhat cheap in motive; very rum and unlike the present kind of novels both for good and evil in writing; and on the whole, only remarkable for the heroine's character, and that I believe to be in it.

I am not well at all. But hope to be better. You know I have been hawked to death these last months. And then I lived too low, I fear; and any way I have got pretty low and out at elbows in health. I wish I could say better,—but I cannot. With a constitution like mine, you never know—to-morrow I may be carrying topgallant sails again: but just at present I am scraping along with a jurymast and a kind of amateur rudder. Truly I have some misery, as things go; but these things

are mere detail. However, I do not want to *crever, claquer*, and cave in just when I have a chance of some happiness; nor do I mean to. All the same, I am more and more in a difficulty how to move every day. What a day or an hour might bring forth, God forbid that I should prophesy. Certainly, do what you like about the stories; *Will o' the Mill*, or not. It will be Caldecott's book or nobody's. I am glad you liked the *Guitar:* I always did: and I think C. could make lovely pikters to it: it almost seems as if I must have written it for him express.

I have already been a visitor at the Club for a fortnight; but that's over, and I don't much care to renew the period. I want to be married, not to belong to all the Clubs in Christendie. . . . I half think of writing up the Sand-lot agitation for Morley; it is a curious business; were I stronger, I should try to sugar in with some of the leaders: a chield amang 'em takin' notes; one, who kept a brothel, I reckon, before she started socialist, particularly interests me. If I am right as to her early industry, you know she would be sure to adore me. I have been all my days a dead hand at a harridan, I never saw the one yet that could resist me. When I die of consumption, you can put that upon my tomb.

Sketch of my tomb follows:—

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

born 1850, of a family of engineers,
died . . .
"Nitor aquis."
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

You, who pass this grave, put aside hatred; love kindness; be all services remembered in your heart and all

offences pardoned; and as you go down again among the living, let this be your question: can I make some one happier this day before I lie down to sleep? Thus the dead man speaks to you from the dust: you will hear no more from him.

Who knows, Colvin, but I may thus be of more use when I am buried than ever when I was alive? The more I think of it, the more earnestly do I desire this. I may perhaps try to write it better some day; but that is what I want in sense. The verses are from a beayootiful poem by me. R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

608 *Bush Street, San Francisco* [*March* 1880].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—My landlord and landlady's little four-year-old child is dying in the house; and O, what he has suffered! It has really affected my health. O never, never any family for me! I am cured of that.

I have taken a long holiday—have not worked for three days, and will not for a week; for I was really weary. Excuse this scratch; for the child weighs on me, dear Colvin. I did all I could to help; but all seems little, to the point of crime, when one of these poor innocents lies in such misery.—Ever yours, R. L. S.

To J. W. Ferrier

In the interval between this letter and the last, the writer had been down with an acute and dangerous illness. *Forester*, here mentioned, was an autobiographical paper by J. W. F. on his own boyhood.

P.O. San Francisco, April 8th, 1880.

MY DEAR FERRIER,—Many thanks for your letter, and the instalment of *Forester* which accompanied it, and

which I read with amusement and pleasure. I fear Somerset's letter must wait; for my dear boy, I have been very nearly on a longer voyage than usual; I am fresh from giving Charon a quid instead of an obolus: but he, having accepted the payment, scorned me, and I had to make the best of my way backward through the mallow-wood, with nothing to show for this displacement but the fatigue of the journey. As soon as I feel fit, you shall have the letter, trust me. But just now even a note such as I am now writing takes it out of me. I have, truly, been very sick; I fear I am a vain man, for I thought it a pity I should die. I could not help thinking that a good many would be disappointed; but for myself, although I still think life a business full of agreeable features I was not entirely unwilling to give it up. It is so difficult to behave well; and in that matter, I get more dissatisfied with myself, because more exigent, every day. I shall be pleased to hear again from you soon. I shall be married early in May and then go to the mountains, a very withered bridegroom. I think your MS. Bible, if that were a specimen, would be a credit to humanity. Between whiles, collect such thoughts both from yourself and others: I somehow believe every man should leave a Bible behind him,—if he is unable to leave a jest book. I feel fit to leave nothing but my benediction. It is a strange thing how, do what you will, nothing seems accomplished. I feel as far from having paid humanity my board and lodging as I did six years ago when I was sick at Mentone. But I dare say the devil would keep telling me so, if I had moved mountains, and at least I have been very happy on many different occasions, and that is always something. I can read nothing, write nothing; but a little while ago and I could eat nothing either; but now that is changed. This is a long letter for me; rub your hands, boy, for 'tis an honour.—Yours, from Charon's strand,

R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

A poetical counterpart to this letter will be found in the piece beginning 'Not yet, my soul, these friendly fields desert,' which was composed at the same time and is printed in *Underwoods*.

San Francisco, April 16 [1880].

MY DEAR GOSSE,—You have not answered my last; and I know you will repent when you hear how near I have been to another world. For about six weeks I have been in utter doubt; it was a toss-up for life or death all that time; but I won the toss, sir, and Hades went off once more discomfited. This is not the first time, nor will it be the last, that I have a friendly game with that gentleman. I know he will end by cleaning me out; but the rogue is insidious, and the habit of that sort of gambling seems to be a part of my nature; it was, I suspect, too much indulged in youth; break your children of this tendency, my dear Gosse, from the first. It is, when once formed, a habit more fatal than opium—I speak, as St. Paul says, like a fool. I have been very very sick; on the verge of a galloping consumption, cold sweats, prostrating attacks of cough, sinking fits in which I lost the power of speech, fever, and all the ugliest circumstances of the disease; and I have cause to bless God, my wife that is to be, and one Dr. Bamford (a name the Muse repels), that I have come out of all this, and got my feet once more upon a little hilltop, with a fair prospect of life and some new desire of living. Yet I did not wish to die, neither; only I felt unable to go on farther with that rough horseplay of human life: a man must be pretty well to take the business in good part. Yet I felt all the time that I had done nothing to entitle me to an honourable discharge; that I had taken up many obligations and begun many friendships which I had no right to put away from me; and that for me to die was to play the cur and slinking sybarite, and desert the colours on the eve of the decisive fight. Of course I

have done no work for I do not know how long; and here you can triumph. I have been reduced to writing verses for amusement. A fact. The whirligig of time brings in its revenges, after all. But I'll have them buried with me, I think, for I have not the heart to burn them while I live. Do write. I shall go to the mountains as soon as the weather clears; on the way thither, I marry myself; then I set up my family altar among the pine-woods, 3,000 feet, sir, from the disputatious sea.—I am, dear Weg, most truly yours, R. L. S.

To Dr. W. Bamford

With a copy of *Travels with a Donkey.*

[*San Francisco, April* 1880.]

MY DEAR SIR,—Will you let me offer you this little book? If I had anything better, it should be yours. May you not dislike it, for it will be your own handiwork if there are other fruits from the same tree! But for your kindness and skill, this would have been my last book, and now I am in hopes that it will be neither my last nor my best.

You doctors have a serious responsibility. You recall a man from the gates of death, you give him health and strength once more to use or to abuse. I hope I shall feel your responsibility added to my own, and seek in the future to make a better profit of the life you have renewed to me.—I am, my dear sir, gratefully yours,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

[*San Francisco, April* 1880.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—You must be sick indeed of my demand for books, for you have seemingly not yet sent me one. Still, I live on promises: waiting for Penn, for

H. James's *Hawthorne*, for my *Burns*, etc.; and now, to make matters worse, pending your Centuries, etc., I do earnestly desire the best book about mythology (if it be German, so much the worse; send a bunctionary along with it, and pray for me). This is why. If I recover, I feel called on to write a volume of gods and demi-gods in exile: Pan, Jove, Cybele, Venus, Charon, etc.; and though I should like to take them very free, I should like to know a little about 'em to begin with. For two days, till last night, I had no night sweats, and my cough is almost gone, and I digest well; so all looks hopeful. However, I was near the other side of Jordan. I send the proof of *Thoreau* to you, so that you may correct and fill up the quotation from Goethe. It is a pity I was ill, as, for matter, I think I prefer that to any of my essays except *Burns;* but the style, though quite manly, never attains any melody or lenity. So much for consumption: I begin to appreciate what the *Emigrant* must be. As soon as I have done the last few pages of the *Emigrant* they shall go to you. But when will that be? I know not quite yet—I have to be so careful.—Ever yours,

R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

[*San Francisco, April* 1880.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—My dear people telegraphed me in these words: "Count on 250 pounds annually." You may imagine what a blessed business this was. And so now recover the sheets of the *Emigrant*, and post them registered to me. And now please give me all your venom against it; say your worst, and most incisively, for now it will be a help, and I'll make it right or perish in the attempt. Now, do you understand why I protested against your depressing eloquence on the subject? When I *had* to go on any way, for dear life, I thought it a kind of pity and not much good to discourage me. Now all's

changed. God only knows how much courage and suffering is buried in that MS. The second part was written in a circle of hell unknown to Dante—that of the penniless and dying author. For dying I was, although now saved. Another week, the doctor said, and I should have been past salvation. I think I shall always think of it as my best work. There is one page in Part II., about having got to shore, and sich, which must have cost me altogether six hours of work as miserable as ever I went through. I feel sick even to think of it.—Ever your friend,

R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

[*San Francisco, May* 1880.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I received your letter and proof to-day, and was greatly delighted with the last.

I am now out of danger; in but a short while (*i.e.* as soon as the weather is settled), F. and I marry and go up to the hills to look for a place; "I to the hills will lift mine eyes, from whence doth come mine aid": once the place found, the furniture will follow. There, sir, in, I hope, a ranche among the pine-trees and hard by a running brook, we are to fish, hunt, sketch, study Spanish, French, Latin, Euclid, and History; and, if possible, not quarrel. Far from man, sir, in the virgin forest. Thence, as my strength returns, you may expect works of genius. I always feel as if I must write a work of genius some time or other; and when is it more likely to come off, than just after I have paid a visit to Styx and go thence to the eternal mountains? Such a revolution in a man's affairs, as I have somewhere written, would set anybody singing. When we get installed, Lloyd and I are going to print my poetical works; so all those who have been poetically addressed shall receive copies of their addresses. They are, I believe, pretty correct literary exercises, or will be, with a few filings; but they are not remarkable

for white-hot vehemence of inspiration; tepid works! respectable versifications of very proper and even original sentiments: kind of Hayleyistic, I fear—but no, this is morbid self-depreciation. The family is all very shaky in health, but our motto is now *Al Monte!* in the words of Don Lope, in the play the sister and I are just beating through with two bad dictionaries and an insane grammar. I to the hills.—Yours ever, R. L. S.

To C. W. Stoddard

This correspondent is the late Mr. Charles Warren Stoddard, author of *Summer Cruising in the South Seas*, etc., with whom Stevenson had made friends in the manner and amid the scenes faithfully described in *The Wrecker*, in the chapter called "Faces on the City Front."

East Oakland, Cal., May 1880.

MY DEAR STODDARD,—I am guilty in thy sight and the sight of God. However, I swore a great oath that you should see some of my manuscript at last; and though I have long delayed to keep it, yet it was to be. You reread your story and were disgusted; that is the cold fit following the hot. I don't say you did wrong to be disgusted, yet I am sure you did wrong to be disgusted altogether. There was, you may depend upon it, some reason for your previous vanity, as well as your present mortification. I shall hear you, years from now, timidly begin to retrim your feathers for a little self-laudation, and trot out this misdespised novelette as not the worst of your performances. I read the album extracts with sincere interest; but I regret that you spared to give the paper more development; and I conceive that you might do a great deal worse than expand each of its paragraphs into an essay or sketch, the excuse being in each case your personal intercourse; the bulk, when that would not be sufficient, to be made up from their own works and stories. Three at least—Menken, Yelverton, and Keeler—could not fail of a vivid human interest. Let me

press upon you this plan; should any document be wanted from Europe, let me offer my services to procure it. I am persuaded that there is stuff in the idea.

Are you coming over again to see me some day soon? I keep returning, and now hand over fist, from the realms of Hades; I saw that gentleman between the eyes, and fear him less after each visit. Only Charon, and his rough boatmanship, I somewhat fear.

I have a desire to write some verses for your album; so, if you will give me the entry among your gods, goddesses, and godlets, there will be nothing wanting but the Muse. I think of the verses like Mark Twain; sometimes I wish fulsomely to belaud you; sometimes to insult your city and fellow-citizens; sometimes to sit down quietly, with the slender reed, and troll a few staves of Panic ecstasy—but fy! fy! as my ancestors observed, the last is too easy for a man of my feet and inches.

At least, Stoddard, you now see that, although so costive, when I once begin I am a copious letter-writer. I thank you, and *au revoir*.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO SIDNEY COLVIN

[*San Francisco, May* 1880.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—It is a long while since I have heard from you; nearly a month, I believe; and I begin to grow very uneasy. At first I was tempted to suppose that I had been myself to blame in some way; but now I have grown to fear lest some sickness or trouble among those whom you love may not be the impediment. I believe I shall soon hear; so I wait as best I can. I am, beyond a doubt, greatly stronger, and yet still useless for any work, and, I may say, for any pleasure. My affairs and the bad weather still keep me here unmarried; but not, I earnestly hope, for long. Whenever I get into the mountain, I trust I shall rapidly pick up. Until I get

away from these sea fogs and my imprisonment in the house, I do not hope to do much more than keep from active harm. My doctor took a desponding fit about me, and scared Fanny into blue fits; but I have talked her over again. It is the change I want, and the blessed sun, and a gentle air in which I can sit out and see the trees and running water: these mere defensive hygienics cannot advance one, though they may prevent evil. I do nothing now, but try to possess my soul in peace, and continue to possess my body on any terms.

Calistoga, Napa County, California.—All which is a fortnight old and not much to the point nowadays. Here we are, Fanny and I, and a certain hound, in a lovely valley under Mount Saint Helena, looking around, or rather wondering when we shall begin to look around, for a house of our own. I have received the first sheets of the *Amateur Emigrant;* not yet the second bunch, as announced. It is a pretty heavy, emphatic piece of pedantry; but I don't care; the public, I verily believe, will like it. I have excised all you proposed and more on my own movement. But I have not yet been able to rewrite the two special pieces which, as you said, so badly wanted it; it is hard work to rewrite passages in proof; and the easiest work is still hard to me. But I am certainly recovering fast; a married and convalescent being.

Received James's *Hawthorne,* on which I meditate a blast, Miss Bird, Dixon's *Penn,* a *wrong* Cornhill (like my luck) and *Coquelin:* for all which, and especially the last, I tender my best thanks. I have opened only James; it is very clever, very well written, and out of sight the most inside-out thing in the world; I have dug up the hatchet; a scalp shall flutter at my belt ere long. I think my new book should be good; it will contain our adventures for the summer, so far as these are worth narrating; and I have already a few pages of diary which should make up bright. I am going to repeat my old experiment, after buckling-to a while to write more

correctly, lie down and have a wallow. Whether I shall get any of my novels done this summer I do not know; I wish to finish the *Vendetta* first, for it really could not come after *Prince Otto*. Lewis Campbell has made some noble work in that Agamemnon; it surprised me. We hope to get a house at Silverado, a deserted mining-camp eight miles up the mountain, now solely inhabited by a mighty hunter answering to the name of Rufe Hansome, who slew last year a hundred and fifty deer. This is the motto I propose for the new volume: "*Vixerunt nonnulli in agris, delectati re sua familiari. His idem propositum fuit quod regibus, ut ne qua re egerent, ne cui parerent, libertate uterentur; cujus proprium est sic vivere ut velis.*" I always have a terror lest the wish should have been father to the translation, when I come to quote; but that seems too plain sailing. I should put *regibus* in capitals for the pleasantry's sake. We are in the Coast range, that being so much cheaper to reach; the family, I hope, will soon follow. Love to all.—Ever yours,

R. L. S.

VI

ALPINE WINTERS AND HIGHLAND SUMMERS

August 1880–October 1882

After spending the months of June and July 1880 in the rough Californian mountain quarters described in the *Silverado Squatters*, Stevenson took passage with his wife and young stepson from New York on the 7th of August, and arrived on the 17th at Liverpool, where his parents and I were waiting to meet him. Of her new family, the Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson brought thus strangely and from far into their midst made an immediate conquest. To her husband's especial happiness, there sprang up between her and his father the closest possible affection and confidence. Parents and friends—if it is permissible to one of the latter to say as much—rejoiced to recognise in Stevenson's wife a character as strong, interesting, and romantic almost as his own; an inseparable sharer of all his thoughts and staunch companion of all his adventures; the most open-hearted of friends to all who loved him; the most shrewd and stimulating critic of his work; and in sickness, despite her own precarious health, the most devoted and most efficient of nurses.

From Liverpool the Stevenson party went on to make a stay in Scotland, first at Edinburgh, and afterwards for a few weeks at Strathpeffer, resting at Blair Athol on the

way. It was now, in his thirtieth year, among the woods of Tummelside and under the shoulder of Ben Wyvis, that Stevenson acknowledged for the first time the full power and beauty of the Highland scenery, which in youth, with his longings fixed ever upon the South, he had been accustomed to think too bleak and desolate. In the history of the country and its clans, on the other hand, and especially of their political and social transformation during the eighteenth century, he had been always keenly interested. In conversations with Principal Tulloch at Strathpeffer this interest was now revived, and he resolved to attempt a book on the subject, his father undertaking to keep him supplied with books and authorities; for it had quickly become apparent that he could not winter in Scotland. The state of his health continued to be very threatening. He suffered from acute chronic catarrh, accompanied by disquieting lung symptoms and great weakness; and was told accordingly that he must go for the winter, and probably for several succeeding winters, to the mountain valley of Davos in Switzerland, which within the last few years had been coming into repute as a place of recovery, or at least of arrested mischief, for lung patients. Thither he and his wife and stepson travelled accordingly at the end of October. Nor must another member of the party be forgotten, a black thoroughbred Skye terrier, the gift of Sir Walter Simpson. This creature was named, after his giver, Walter—a name subsequently corrupted into Wattie, Woggie, Wogg, Woggin, Bogie, Bogue, and a number of other affectionate diminutives which will be found occurring often enough in the following pages. He was a remarkably pretty, engaging, excitable, ill-behaved little specimen of his race, the occasion of infinite anxiety and

laughing care to his devoted master and mistress until his death six years later.

The Davos of 1880, approached by an eight-hours' laborious drive up the valley of the Prättigau, was a very different place from the extended and embellished Davos of to-day, with its railway, its modern shops, its electric lighting, and its crowd of winter visitors bent on outdoor and indoor entertainment. The Stevensons' quarters for the first winter were at the Hotel Belvedere, then a mere nucleus of the huge establishment it has since become. Besides the usual society of an invalid hotel, with its mingled tragedies and comedies, they had there the great advantage of the presence, in a neighbouring house, of an accomplished man of letters and one of the most charming of companions, John Addington Symonds, with his family. Mr. Symonds, whose health had been desperate before he tried the place, was a living testimony to its virtues, and was at this time engaged in building the chalet which became his home until he died fourteen years later. During Stevenson's first season at Davos, though his mind was full of literary enterprises, he was too ill to do much actual work. For the Highland history he read much, but composed little or nothing, and eventually this history went to swell the long list of his unwritten books. He saw through the press his first volume of collected essays, *Virginibus Puerisque*, which came out early in 1881; wrote the essays *Samuel Pepys* and *The Morality of the Profession of Letters*, for the Cornhill and the Fortnightly Review respectively, and sent to the Pall Mall Gazette the papers on the life and climate of Davos, posthumously reprinted in *Essays of Travel*. Beyond this, he only amused himself with verses, some of them afterwards published in *Underwoods*. Leaving the Alps at the

end of April 1881, he returned, after a short stay in France (at Fontainebleau, Paris, and St. Germain), to his family in Edinburgh. Thence the whole party again went to the Highlands, this time to Pitlochry and Braemar.

During the summer Stevenson heard of the intended retirement of Professor Æneas Mackay from the chair of History and Constitutional Law at Edinburgh University. He determined, with the encouragement of the outgoing professor and of several of his literary friends, to become a candidate for the post, which had to be filled by the Faculty of Advocates from among their own number. The duties were limited to the delivery of a short course of lectures in the summer term, and Stevenson thought that he might be equal to them, and might prove, though certainly a new, yet perhaps a stimulating, type of professor. But knowing the nature of his public reputation, especially in Edinburgh, where the recollection of his daft student days was as yet stronger than the impression made by his recent performances in literature, he was well aware that his candidature must seem paradoxical, and stood little chance of success. The election took place in the late autumn of the same year, and he was defeated, receiving only three votes.

At Pitlochry Stevenson was for a while able to enjoy his life and to work well, writing two of the strongest of his short stories of Scottish life and superstition, *Thrawn Janet* and *The Merry Men*, originally designed to form part of a volume to be written by himself and his wife in collaboration. At Braemar he made a beginning of the nursery verses which afterwards grew into the volume called *The Child's Garden*, and conceived and half executed the fortunate project of *Treasure Island*, the book which was destined first to make him famous. But one of the

most inclement of Scottish summers had before long undone all the good gained in the previous winter at Davos, and in the autumn of the year 1881 he repaired thither again.

This time his quarters were in a small chalet belonging to the proprietors of the Buol Hotel, the Chalet am Stein, or Chalet Buol, in the near neighbourhood of the Symonds's house. The beginning of his second stay was darkened by the serious illness of his wife; nevertheless the winter was one of much greater literary activity than the last. A Life of Hazlitt was projected, and studies were made for it, but for various reasons the project was never carried out. *Treasure Island* was finished; the greater part of the *Silverado Squatters* written; so were the essays *Talk and Talkers*, *A Gossip on Romance*, and several other of his best papers for magazines. By way of whim and pastime he occupied himself, to his own and his stepson's delight, with a little set of woodcuts and verses printed by the latter at his toy press—"The Davos Press," as they called it—as well as with mimic campaigns carried on between the man and boy with armies of lead soldiers in the spacious loft which filled the upper floor of the chalet. For the first and almost the only time in his life there awoke in him during these winters in Davos the spirit of lampoon; and he poured forth sets of verses, not without touches of a Swiftean fire, against commercial frauds in general, and those of certain local tradesmen in particular, as well as others in memory of a defunct publican of Edinburgh who had been one of his butts in youth (*Casparidea* and *Brashiana*, both unpublished: see pp. 14, 15, 38 in vol. 24 of the present edition). Finally, much revived in health by the beneficent air of the Alpine valley, he left it again in mid-spring of 1882, to return

once more to Scotland, and to be once more thrown back to, or below, the point whence he had started. After a short excursion from Edinburgh into the Appin country, where he made inquiries on the spot into the traditions concerning the murder of Campbell of Glenure, his three resting-places in Scotland during this summer were Stobo Manse near Peebles, Lochearnhead, and Kingussie. At Stobo the dampness of the season and the place quickly threw him again into a very low state of health, from which three subsequent weeks of brilliant sunshine in Speyside did but little to restore him. In spite of this renewed breakdown, when autumn came he would not face the idea of returning for a third season to Davos. He had himself felt deeply the austerity and monotony of the white Alpine world in winter; and though he had unquestionably gained in health there, his wife on her part had suffered much. So he made up his mind once again to try the Mediterranean coast of France, and Davos knew him no more.

To Sidney Colvin

I forget what were the two sets of verses (apparently satirical) here mentioned. The volume of essays must be *Virginibus Puerisque*, published the following spring; but it is dedicated in prose to W. E. Henley.

Ben Wyvis Hotel, Strathpeffer [*July* 1880].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—One or two words. We are here: all goes exceeding well with the wife and with the parents. Near here is a valley; birch woods, heather, and a stream; I have lain down and died; no country, no place, was ever for a moment so delightful to my soul. And I have been a Scotchman all my life, and denied my native land! Away with your gardens of roses, indeed!

Give me the cool breath of Rogie waterfall, henceforth and for ever, world without end.

I enclose two poems of, I think, a high order. One is my dedication for my essays; it was occasioned by that delicious article in the Spectator. The other requires no explanation; c'est tout bonnement un petit chef d'œuvre de grâce, de délicatesse, et de bon sens humanitaire. Celui qui ne s'en sent pas touché jusqu'aux larmes—celui-là n'a pas vécu. I wish both poems back, as I am copyless: but they might return *via* Henley.

My father desires me still to withdraw the *Emigrant*. Whatever may be the pecuniary loss, he is willing to bear it; and the gain to my reputation will be considerable.

I am writing against time and the post runner. But you know what kind messages we both send to you. May you have as good a time as possible so far from Rogie!

R. L. S.

To Charles Baxter

A further stay at Strathpeffer led to disenchantment, not with outdoor nature but with human nature as there represented, and he relieves his feelings as follows:—

Ben Wyvis Hotel, Strathpeffer, July 1880.

MY DEAR CHERLS,—I am well but have a little overtired myself which is disgusting. This is a heathenish place near delightful places, but inhabited, alas! by a wholly bestial crowd.

ON SOME GHOSTLY COMPANIONS AT A SPA

I had an evil day when I
To Strathpeffer drew anigh,
For there I found no human soul,
But Ogres occupied the whole.
They had at first a human air
In coats and flannel underwear.
They rose and walked upon their feet
And filled their bellies full of meat,

Then wiped their lips when they had done—
But they were ogres every one.
Each issuing from his secret bower
I marked them in the morning hour.
By limp and totter, list and droop,
I singled each one from the group.
Detected ogres, from my sight
Depart to your congenial night
From these fair vales: from this fair day
Fleet, spectres, on your downward way,
Like changing figures in a dream
To Muttonhole and Pittenweem!
Or, as by harmony divine
The devils quartered in the swine,
If any baser place exist
In God's great registration list—
Some den with wallow and a trough—
Find it, ye ogres, and be off!

Yours, R. L. S.

To Isobel Strong

Further letters from Scotland during these months are lacking. The next was written, in answer to an inquiry from his stepdaughter at San Francisco, on the second day after his arrival at Davos.

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, November 1880.

No my che-ild—not Kamschatka this trip, only the top of the Alps, or thereby; up in a little valley in a wilderness of snowy mountains; the Rhine not far from us, quite a little highland river; eternal snow-peaks on every hand. Yes; just this once I should like to go to the Vienna gardens [1] with the family and hear Tweedledee and drink something and see Germans—though God knows we have seen Germans enough this while back. Naturally some in the Customs House on the Alsatian frontier, who would have made one die from laughing in

[1] In San Francisco.

a theatre, and provoked a smile from us even in that dismal juncture. To see them, big, blond, sham-Englishmen, but with an unqualifiable air of not quite fighting the sham through, diving into old women's bags and going into paroxysms of arithmetic in white chalk, three or four of them (in full uniform) in full cry upon a single sum, with their brows bent and a kind of arithmetical agony upon their mugs. Madam, the diversion of cock-fighting has been much commended, but it was not a circumstance to that Custom House. They only opened one of our things: a basket. But when they met from within the intelligent gaze of *Woggs*, they all lay down and died. Woggs is a fine dog. . . .

God bless you! May coins fall into your coffee and the finest wines and wittles lie smilingly about your path, with a kind of dissolving view of fine scenery by way of background; and may all speak well of you—and me too for that matter—and generally all things be ordered unto you totally regardless of expense and with a view to nothing in the world but enjoyment, edification, and a portly and honoured age.—Your dear papa, R. L. S.

To A. G. Dew-Smith

This, from the same place and about the same date, is addressed by way of thanks to a friend at Cambridge, the late Mr. A. G. Dew-Smith, who had sent him a present of a box of cigarettes. Mr. Dew-Smith, a man of fine artistic tastes and mechanical genius, with a silken, somewhat foreign, urbanity of bearing, was the original, so far as concerns manner and way of speech, of Attwater in the *Ebb-Tide*.

[*Hotel Belvedere, Davos, November* 1880].

Figure me to yourself, I pray—
A man of my peculiar cut—
Apart from dancing and deray,[1]
Into an Alpine valley shut;

[1] "The whole front of the house was lighted, and there were pipes and fiddles, and as much dancing and deray within as used to be in

Shut in a kind of damned Hotel,
Discountenanced by God and man;
The food?—Sir, you would do as well
To cram your belly full of bran.

The company? Alas, the day
That I should dwell with such a crew,
With devil anything to say,
Nor any one to say it to!

The place? Although they call it Platz,
I will be bold and state my view;
It's not a place at all—and that's
The bottom verity, my Dew.

There are, as I will not deny,
Innumerable inns; a road;
Several Alps indifferent high;
The snow's inviolable abode;

Eleven English parsons, all
Entirely inoffensive; four
True human beings—what I call
Human—the deuce a cipher more;

A climate of surprising worth;
Innumerable dogs that bark;
Some air, some weather, and some earth;
A native race—God save the mark!—

A race that works, yet cannot work,
Yodels, but cannot yodel right,
Such as, unhelp'd, with rusty dirk,
I vow that I could wholly smite.

Sir Robert's house at Pace and Yule, and such high seasons."—See *Wandering Willie's Tale* in *Redgauntlet*, borrowed perhaps from *Christ's Kirk of the Green.*

A river [1] that from morn to night
Down all the valley plays the fool;
Not once she pauses in her flight,
Nor knows the comfort of a pool;

But still keeps up, by straight or bend,
The selfsame pace she hath begun—
Still hurry, hurry, to the end—
Good God, is that the way to run?

If I a river were, I hope
That I should better realise
The opportunities and scope
Of that romantic enterprise.

I should not ape the merely strange,
But aim besides at the divine;
And continuity and change
I still should labour to combine.

Here should I gallop down the race,
Here charge the sterling [2] like a bull;
There, as a man might wipe his face,
Lie, pleased and panting, in a pool.

But what, my Dew, in idle mood,
What prate I, minding not my debt?
What do I talk of bad or good?
The best is still a cigarette.

Me whether evil fate assault,
Or smiling providences crown—
Whether on high the eternal vault
Be blue, or crash with thunder down—

[1] The Davoser Landwasser.
[2] In architecture, a series of piles to defend the pier of a bridge.

I judge the best, whate'er befall,
Is still to sit on one's behind,
And, having duly moistened all,
Smoke with an unperturbèd mind.

R. L. S.

To Thomas Stevenson

R. L. S. here sketches for his father the plan of the work on Highland history which they had discussed together in the preceding summer, and which Principal Tulloch had urged him to attempt.

Hotel Belvedere, Davos [*December* 12, 1880].

MY DEAR FATHER,—Here is the scheme as well as I can foresee. I begin the book immediately after the '15, as then began the attempt to suppress the Highlands.

I. Thirty Years' Interval

(1) Rob Roy.
(2) The Independent Companies: the Watches.
(3) Story of Lady Grange.
(4) The Military Roads, and Disarmament: Wade and
(5) Burt.

II. The Heroic Age

(1) Duncan Forbes of Culloden.
(2) Flora Macdonald.
(3) The Forfeited Estates; including Hereditary Jurisdictions; and the admirable conduct of the tenants.

III. Literature here intervenes

(1) The Ossianic Controversy.
(2) Boswell and Johnson.
(3) Mrs. Grant of Laggan.

IV. Economy

(1) Highland Economics.
(2) The Reinstatement of the Proprietors.
(3) The Evictions.
(4) Emigration.
(5) Present State.

V. Religion

(1) The Catholics, Episcopals, and Kirk, and Soc. Prop. Christ. Knowledge.
(2) The Men.
(3) The Disruption.

All this, of course, will greatly change in form, scope, and order; this is just a bird's-eye glance. Thank you for *Burt*, which came, and for your Union notes. I have read one-half (about 900 pages) of Wodrow's *Correspondence*, with some improvement, but great fatigue. The doctor thinks well of my recovery, which puts me in good hope for the future. I should certainly be able to make a fine history of this.

My Essays are going through the press, and should be out in January or February.—Ever affectionate son,

R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Hotel Belvedere, Davos, December* 1880]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I feel better, but variable. I see from the doctor's report that I have more actual disease than I supposed; but there seems little doubt of my recovery. I like the place and shall like it much better when you come at Christmas. That is written on my heart: S. C. comes at Christmas: so if you play me false, I shall have a lie upon my conscience. I like Symonds very well, though he is much, I think, of an invalid in mind and character. But his mind is interesting, with

many beautiful corners, and his consumptive smile very winning to see. We have had some good talks; one went over Zola, Balzac, Flaubert, Whitman, Christ, Handel, Milton, Sir Thomas Browne; do you see the *liaison?*—in another, I, the Bohnist, the un-Grecian, was the means of his conversion in the matter of the Ajax. It is truly not for nothing that I have read my Buckley.[1]

To-day the south wind blows; and I am seedy in consequence.

Later.—I want to know when you are coming, so as to get you a room. You will toboggan and skate your head off, and I will talk it off, and briefly if you don't come pretty soon, I will cut you off with a shilling.

It would be handsome of you to write. The doctor says I may be as well as ever; but in the meantime I go slow and am fit for little.—Ever yours, R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

The suggestions contained in the following two letters to Mr. Gosse refer to the collection of English Odes which that gentleman was then engaged in editing (Kegan Paul, 1881).

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, [*Dec.* 6, 1880].

MY DEAR WEG,—I have many letters that I ought to write in preference to this; but a duty to letters and to you prevails over any private consideration. You are going to collect odes; I could not wish a better man to do so; but I tremble lest you should commit two sins of omission. You will not, I am sure, be so far left to yourself as to give us no more of Dryden than the hackneyed St. Cecilia; I know you will give us some others of those surprising masterpieces where there is more sustained eloquence and harmony of English numbers than in all that has been written since; there is a machine about a poetical young lady,[2] and another about either Charles or

[1] The translator of Sophocles in Bohn's Classics.
[2] Anne Killigrew.

James, I know not which; and they are both indescribably fine. (Is Marvell's Horatian Ode good enough? I half think so.) But my great point is a fear that you are one of those who are unjust to our old Tennyson's Duke of Wellington. I have just been talking it over with Symonds; and we agreed that whether for its metrical effects, for its brief, plain, stirring words of portraiture, as—he "that never lost an English gun," or—the soldier salute; or for the heroic apostrophe to Nelson; that ode has never been surpassed in any tongue or time. Grant me the Duke, O Weg! I suppose you must not put in yours about the warship; you will have to admit worse ones, however.—Ever yours, R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, Dec. 19, 1880.

This letter is a report of a long sederunt, also steterunt, in small committee at Davos Platz, Dec. 15, 1880. Its results are unhesitatingly shot at your head.

MY DEAR WEG,—We both insist on the Duke of Wellington. Really it cannot be left out. Symonds said you would cover yourself with shame, and I add, your friends with confusion, if you leave it out. Really, you know it is the only thing you have, since Dryden, where that irregular odic, odal, odous (?) verse is used with mastery and sense. And it's one of our few English blood-boilers.

(2) Byron: if anything: *Prometheus.*

(3) Shelley (1) *The World's Great Age* from Hellas; we are both dead on. After that you have, of course, *The West Wind* thing. But we think (1) would maybe be enough; no more than two any way.

(4) Herrick. *Meddowes* and *Come, my Corinna.* After that *Mr. Wickes:* two any way.

(5) Leave out stanza 3rd of Congreve's thing, like a dear; we can't stand the "sigh" nor the "peruke."

(6) Milton. *Time* and the *Solemn Music*. We both agree we would rather go without L'Allegro and Il Penseroso than these; for the reason that these are not so well known to the brutish herd.

(7) Is the *Royal George* an ode, or only an elegy? It's so good.

(8) We leave Campbell to you.

(9) If you take anything from Clough, but we don't either of us fancy you will, let it be *Come back*.

(10) Quite right about Dryden. I had a hankering after *Threnodia Augustalis;* but I find it long and with very prosaic holes: though, O! what fine stuff between whiles.

(11) Right with Collins.

(12) Right about Pope's Ode. But what can you give? *The Dying Christian?* or one of his inimitable courtesies? These last are fairly odes, by the Horatian model, just as my dear *Meddowes* is an ode in the name and for the sake of Bandusia.

(13) Whatever you do, you'll give us the Greek Vase.

(14) Do you like Jonson's "loathèd stage"? Verses 2, 3, and 4 are so bad, also the last line. But there is a fine movement and feeling in the rest.

We will have the Duke of Wellington by God. Pro Symonds and Stevenson. R. L. S.

To Charles Warren Stoddard

The prospect here alluded to of a cheap edition of the little travel-books did not get realised. The volume of essays in the printer's hands was *Virginibus Puerisque*. I do not know what were the pages in broad Scots copied by way of enclosure.

Hotel Belvedere, Davos [*December* 1880].

DEAR CHARLES WARREN STODDARD,—Many thanks to you for the letter and the photograph. Will you think it mean if I ask you to wait till there appears a promised

cheap edition? Possibly the canny Scot does feel pleasure in the superior cheapness; but the true reason is this, that I think to put a few words, by way of notes, to each book in its new form, because that will be the Standard Edition, without which no g.'s l.[1] will be complete. The edition, briefly, *sine qua non*. Before that, I shall hope to send you my essays, which are in the printer's hands. I look to get yours soon. I am sorry to hear that the Custom House has proved fallible, like all other human houses and customs. Life consists of that sort of business, and I fear that there is a class of man, of which you offer no inapt type, doomed to a kind of mild, general disappointment through life. I do not believe that a man is the more unhappy for that. Disappointment, except with one's self, is not a very capital affair; and the sham beatitude, "Blessed is he that expecteth little," one of the truest, and in a sense, the most Christlike things in literature.

Alongside of you, I have been all my days a red cannon ball of dissipated effort; here I am by the heels in this Alpine valley, with just so much of a prospect of future restoration as shall make my present caged estate easily tolerable to me—shall or should, I would not swear to the word before the trial's done. I miss all my objects in the meantime; and, thank God, I have enough of my old, and maybe somewhat base philosophy, to keep me on a good understanding with myself and Providence.

The mere extent of a man's travels has in it something consolatory. That he should have left friends and enemies in many different and distant quarters gives a sort of earthly dignity to his existence. And I think the better of myself for the belief that I have left some in California interested in me and my successes. Let me assure you, you who have made friends already among such various and distant races, that there is a certain

[1] Gentleman's library.

phthisical Scot who will always be pleased to hear good news of you, and would be better pleased by nothing than to learn that you had thrown off your present incubus, largely consisting of letters I believe, and had sailed into some square work by way of change.

And by way of change in itself, let me copy on the other pages some broad Scotch I wrote for you when I was ill last spring in Oakland. It is no muckle worth: but ye should na look a gien horse in the moo'.—Yours ever, R. L. Stevenson.

To Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

The verses here mentioned to Dr. John Brown (the admired author of *Rab and his Friends*) were meant as a reply to a letter of congratulation on the *Inland Voyage* received from him the year before. They are printed in *Underwoods*.

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, December 21, 1880.

my dear people,—I do not understand these reproaches. The letters come between seven and nine in the evening; and every one about the books was answered that same night, and the answer left Davos by seven o'clock next morning. Perhaps the snow delayed them; if so, 'tis a good hint to you not to be uneasy at apparent silences. There is no hurry about my father's notes; I shall not be writing anything till I get home again, I believe. Only I want to be able to keep reading *ad hoc* all winter, as it seems about all I shall be fit for. About John Brown, I have been breaking my heart to finish a Scotch poem to him. Some of it is not really bad, but the rest will not come, and I mean to get it right before I do anything else.

The bazaar is over, £160 gained, and everybody's health lost: altogether, I never had a more uncomfortable time; apply to Fanny for further details of the discomfort.

We have our Wogg in somewhat better trim now, and

vastly better spirits. The weather has been bad—for Davos, but indeed it is a wonderful climate. It never feels cold; yesterday, with a little, chill, small, northerly draught, for the first time, it was pinching. Usually, it may freeze, or snow, or do what it pleases, you feel it not, or hardly any.

Thanks for your notes; that fishery question will come in, as you notice, in the Highland Book, as well as under the Union; it is very important. I hear no word of Hugh Miller's *Evictions;* I count on that. What you say about the old and new Statistical is odd. It seems to me very much as if I were gingerly embarking on a *History of Modern Scotland.* Probably Tulloch will never carry it out. And, you see, once I have studied and written these two vols., *The Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* and *Scotland and the Union,* I shall have a good ground to go upon. The effect on my mind of what I have read has been to awaken a livelier sympathy for the Irish; although they never had the remarkable virtues, I fear they have suffered many of the injustices, of the Scottish Highlanders. Ruedi has seen me this morning; he says the disease is at a standstill, and I am to profit by it to take more exercise. Altogether, he seemed quite hopeful and pleased.—I am your ever affectionate son, R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, [*Christmas* 1880].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Thanks for yours; I waited, as I said I would. I now expect no answer from you, regarding you as a mere dumb cock-shy, or a target, at which we fire our arrows diligently all day long, with no anticipation it will bring them back to us. We are both sadly mortified you are not coming, but health comes first; alas, that man should be so crazy. What fun we could have, if we were all well, what work we could do, what a

happy place we could make it for each other! If I were able to do what I want; but then I am not, and may leave that vein.

No. I do not think I shall require to know the Gaelic; few things are written in that language, or ever were; if you come to that, the number of those who could write, or even read it, through almost all my period, must, by all accounts, have been incredibly small. Of course, until the book is done, I must live as much as possible in the Highlands, and that suits my book as to health. It is a most interesting and sad story, and from the '45 it is all to be written for the first time. This, of course, will cause me a far greater difficulty about authorities; but I have already learned much, and where to look for more. One pleasant feature is the vast number of delightful writers I shall have to deal with: Burt, Johnson, Boswell, Mrs. Grant of Laggan, Scott. There will be interesting sections on the Ossianic controversy and the growth of the taste for Highland scenery. I have to touch upon Rob Roy, Flora Macdonald, the strange story of Lady Grange, the beautiful story of the tenants on the Forfeited Estates, and the odd, inhuman problem of the great evictions. The religious conditions are wild, unknown, very surprising. And three out of my five parts remain hitherto entirely unwritten. Smack!—Yours ever,

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, [*December* 26, 1880].
Christmas Sermon.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I was very tired yesterday and could not write; tobogganed so furiously all morning; we had a delightful day, crowned by an incredible dinner —more courses than I have fingers on my hands. Your letter arrived duly at night, and I thank you for it as I should. You need not suppose I am at all insensible to

my father's extraordinary kindness about this book; he is a brick; I vote for him freely.

. . . The assurance you speak of is what we all ought to have, and might have, and should not consent to live without. That people do not have it more than they do is, I believe, because persons speak so much in large-drawn, theological similitudes, and won't say out what they mean about life, and man, and God, in fair and square human language. I wonder if you or my father ever thought of the obscurities that lie upon human duty from the negative form in which the Ten Commandments are stated, or of how Christ was so continually substituting affirmations. "Thou shalt not" is but an example; "Thou shalt" is the law of God. It was this that seems meant in the phrase that "not one jot nor tittle of the law should pass." But what led me to the remark is this: A kind of black, angry look goes with that statement of the law of negatives. "To love one's neighbour as oneself" is certainly much harder, but states life so much more actively, gladly, and kindly, that you can begin to see some pleasure in it; and till you can see pleasure in these hard choices and bitter necessities, where is there any Good News to men? It is much more important to do right than not to do wrong; further, the one is possible, the other has always been and will ever be impossible; and the faithful *design to do right* is accepted by God; that seems to me to be the Gospel, and that was how Christ delivered us from the Law. After people are told that, surely they might hear more encouraging sermons. To blow the trumpet for good would seem the Parson's business; and since it is not in our own strength, but by faith and perseverance (no account made of slips), that we are to run the race, I do not see where they get the material for their gloomy discourses. Faith is not to believe the Bible, but to believe in God; if you believe in God (or, for it's the same thing, have that assurance you speak about), where is there any more room for

terror? There are only three possible attitudes—Optimism, which has gone to smash; Pessimism, which is on the rising hand, and very popular with many clergymen who seem to think they are Christians. And this Faith, which is the Gospel. Once you hold the last, it is your business (1) to find out what is right in any given case, and (2) to try to do it; if you fail in the last, that is by commission, Christ tells you to hope; if you fail in the first, that is by omission, his picture of the last day gives you but a black lookout. The whole necessary morality is kindness; and it should spring, of itself, from the one fundamental doctrine, Faith. If you are sure that God, in the long run, means kindness by you, you should be happy; and if happy, surely you should be kind.

I beg your pardon for this long discourse; it is not all right, of course, but I am sure there is something in it. One thing I have not got clearly; that about the omission and the commission; but there is truth somewhere about it, and I have no time to clear it just now. Do you know, you have had about a Cornhill page of sermon? It is, however, true.

Lloyd heard with dismay Fanny was not going to give me a present; so F. and I had to go and buy things for ourselves, and go through a representation of surprise when they were presented next morning. It gave us both quite a Santa Claus feeling on Xmas Eve to see him so excited and hopeful; I enjoyed it hugely.—Your affectionate son, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO SIDNEY COLVIN

I did go out to Davos after all in January, and found Stevenson apparently little improved in health, and depressed by a sad turn of destiny which had brought out his old friend Mrs. Sitwell to the same place, at the same time, to watch beside the deathbed of her son—the youth commemorated in the verses headed *F. A. S., In Memoriam*, afterwards published in *Underwoods*. The follow-

ing letter refers to a copy of Carlyle's *Reminiscences* which I had sent him some time after I came back to England.

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, [*Spring* 1881].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—My health is not just what it should be; I have lost weight, pulse, respiration, etc., and gained nothing in the way of my old bellows. But these last few days, with tonic, cod-liver oil, better wine (there is some better now), and perpetual beef-tea, I think I have progressed. To say truth, I have been here a little over long. I was reckoning up, and since I have known you, already quite a while, I have not, I believe, remained so long in any one place as here in Davos. That tells on my old gipsy nature; like a violin hung up, I begin to lose what music there was in me; and with the music, I do not know what besides, or do not know what to call it, but something radically part of life, a rhythm, perhaps, in one's old and so brutally over-ridden nerves, or perhaps a kind of variety of blood that the heart has come to look for.

I purposely knocked myself off first. As to F. A. S., I believe I am no sound authority; I alternate between a stiff disregard and a kind of horror. In neither mood can a man judge at all. I know the thing to be terribly perilous, I fear it to be now altogether hopeless. Luck has failed; the weather has not been favourable; and in her true heart, the mother hopes no more. But—well, I feel a great deal, that I either cannot or will not say, as you well know. It has helped to make me more conscious of the wolverine on my own shoulders, and that also makes me a poor judge and poor adviser. Perhaps, if we were all marched out in a row, and a piece of platoon firing to the drums performed, it would be well for us; although, I suppose—and yet I wonder!—so ill for the poor mother and for the dear wife. But you can see this makes me morbid. *Sufficit; explicit.*

You are right about the Carlyle book; F. and I are in a world not ours; but pardon me, as far as sending on goes, we take another view: the first volume, *à la bonne*

heure! but not—never—the second. Two hours of hysterics can be no good matter for a sick nurse, and the strange, hard, old being in so lamentable and yet human a desolation—crying out like a burnt child, and yet always wisely and beautifully—how can that end, as a piece of reading, even to the strong—but on the brink of the most cruel kind of weeping? I observe the old man's style is stronger on me than ever it was, and by rights, too, since I have just laid down his most attaching book. God rest the baith o' them! But even if they do not meet again, how we should all be strengthened to be kind, and not only in act, in speech also, that so much more important part. See what this apostle of silence most regrets, not speaking out his heart.

I was struck as you were by the admirable, sudden, clear sunshine upon Southey — even on his works. Symonds, to whom I repeated it, remarked at once, a man who was thus respected by both Carlyle and Landor must have had more in him than we can trace. So I feel with true humility.

It was to save my brain that Symonds proposed reviewing. He and, it appears, Leslie Stephen fear a little some eclipse: I am not quite without sharing the fear. I know my own languor as no one else does; it is a dead down-draught, a heavy fardel. Yet if I could shake off the wolverine aforesaid, and his fangs are lighter, though perhaps I feel them more, I believe I could be myself again a while. I have not written any letter for a great time; none saying what I feel, since you were here, I fancy. Be duly obliged for it, and take my most earnest thanks not only for the books but for your letter.—Your affectionate,

R. L. S.

The effect of reading this on Fanny shows me I must tell you I am very happy, peaceful, and jolly, except for questions of work and the states of other people.

Woggin sends his love.

To Horatio F. Brown

A close intimate of J. A. Symonds, and frequent visitor at Davos, was Mr. Horatio F. Brown, author of *Life on the Lagoons*, etc. He took warmly, as did every one, to Stevenson. The following two notes are from a copy of Penn's *Fruits of Solitude*, printed at Philadelphia, which Stevenson sent him as a gift this winter after his return to Venice.

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, [*February* 1881].

MY DEAR BROWN,—Here it is, with the mark of a San Francisco *bouquiniste*. And if ever in all my "human conduct" I have done a better thing to any fellow-creature than handing on to you this sweet, dignified, and wholesome book, I know I shall hear of it on the last day. To write a book like this were impossible; at least one can hand it on—with a wrench—one to another. My wife cries out and my own heart misgives me, but still here it is. I could scarcely better prove myself—Yours affectionately, R. L. STEVENSON.

To Horatio F. Brown

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, [*February* 1881].

MY DEAR BROWN,—I hope, if you get thus far, you will know what an invaluable present I have made you. Even the copy was dear to me, printed in the colony that Penn established, and carried in my pocket all about the San Francisco streets, read in street cars and ferry-boats, when I was sick unto death, and found in all times and places a peaceful and sweet companion. But I hope, when you shall have reached this note, my gift will not have been in vain; for while just now we are so busy and intelligent, there is not the man living, no, nor recently dead, that could put, with so lovely a spirit, so much honest, kind wisdom into words. R. L. S.

To Horatio F. Brown

The following experiment in English alcaics was suggested by conversations with Mr. Brown and J. A. Symonds on metrical forms, followed by the despatch of some translations from old Venetian boat-songs by the former after his return to Venice.

Hotel Belvedere, Davos, [*April* 1881].

MY DEAR BROWN,—Nine years I have conded them.

Brave lads in olden musical centuries
Sang, night by night, adorable choruses,
  Sat late by alehouse doors in April
  Chaunting in joy as the moon was rising:

Moon-seen and merry, under the trellises,
Flush-faced they played with old polysyllables;
  Spring scents inspired,[1] old wine diluted;
  Love and Apollo were there to chorus.

Now these, the songs, remain to eternity,
Those, only those, the bountiful choristers
  Gone—those are gone, those unremembered
  Sleep and are silent in earth for ever.

So man himself appears and evanishes,
So smiles and goes; as wanderers halting at
  Some green-embowered house, play their music,
  Play and are gone on the windy highway;

Yet dwells the strain enshrined in the memory
Long after they departed eternally,
  Forth-faring tow'rd far mountain summits,
  Cities of men on the sounding Ocean.

[1] *i.e.* breathed in, inhaled: a rare but legitimate use of the word.

Youth sang the song in years immemorial;
Brave chanticleer, he sang and was beautiful;
Bird-haunted, green tree-tops in springtime
Heard and were pleased by the voice of singing;

Youth goes, and leaves behind him a prodigy—
Songs sent by thee afar from Venetian
Sea-grey lagunes, sea-paven highways,
Dear to me here in my Alpine exile.

Please, my dear Brown, forgive my horrid delay. Symonds overworked and knocked up. I off my sleep; my wife gone to Paris. Weather lovely.—Yours ever,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Monte Generoso in May; here, I think, till the end of April; write again, to prove you are forgiving.

To Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

Monte Generoso was given up; and on the way home to Scotland Stevenson had stopped for a while at Fontainebleau, and then in Paris; whence, finding himself unpleasantly affected by the climate, he presently took refuge at St. Germain.

Hotel du Pavillon Henry IV.,
St. Germain-en-Laye, Sunday, May 1st, 1881.

MY DEAR PEOPLE,—A week in Paris reduced me to the limpness and lack of appetite peculiar to a kid glove, and gave Fanny a jumping sore throat. It's my belief there is death in the kettle there; a pestilence or the like. We came out here, pitched on the *Star and Garter* (they call it Somebody's pavilion), found the place a bed of lilacs and nightingales (first time I ever heard one), and also of a bird called the *piasseur*, cheerfulest of sylvan creatures, an ideal comic opera in itself. "Come along, what fun, here's Pan in the next glade at picnic, and this-yer's

Arcadia, and it's awful fun, and I've had a glass, I will not deny, but not to see it on me," that is his meaning as near as I can gather. Well, the place (forest of beeches all new-fledged, grass like velvet, fleets of hyacinth) pleased us and did us good. We tried all ways to find a cheaper place, but could find nothing safe; cold, damp, brick-floored rooms and sich; we could not leave Paris till your seven days' sight on draft expired; we dared not go back to be miasmatised in these homes of putridity; so here we are till Tuesday in the *Star and Garter*. My throat is quite cured, appetite and strength on the mend. Fanny seems also picking up.

If we are to come to Scotland, I *will* have fir-trees, and I want a burn, the firs for my physical, the water for my moral health.—Ever affectionate son, R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

At Pitlochry, Stevenson was for some weeks in good health and working order. The inquiries about the later life of Jean Cavalier, the Protestant leader in the Cévennes, refer to a literary scheme, whether of romance or history I forget, which had been in his mind ever since the *Travels with a Donkey*.

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry, June 6, 1881.

MY DEAR WEG,—Here I am in my native land, being gently blown and hailed upon, and sitting nearer and nearer to the fire. A cottage near a moor is soon to receive our human forms; it is also near a burn to which Professor Blackie (no less!) has written some verses in his hot old age, and near a farm from whence we shall draw cream and fatness. Should I be moved to join Blackie, I shall go upon my knees and pray hard against temptation; although, since the new Version, I do not know the proper form of words. The swollen, childish, and pedantic vanity that moved the said revisers to put "bring" for "lead," is a sort of literary fault that calls for an eternal hell; it may be quite a small place, a star

of the least magnitude, and shabbily furnished; there shall ——, ——, the revisers of the Bible and other absolutely loathsome literary lepers, dwell among broken pens, bad, *groundy* ink and ruled blotting-paper made in France—all eagerly burning to write, and all inflicted with incurable aphasia. I should not have thought upon that torture had I not suffered it in moderation myself, but it is too horrid even for a hell; let's let 'em off with an eternal toothache.

All this talk is partly to persuade you that I write to you out of good feeling only, which is not the case. I am a beggar; ask Dobson, Saintsbury, yourself, and any other of these cheeses who know something of the eighteenth century, what became of Jean Cavalier between his coming to England and his death in 1740. Is anything interesting known about him? Whom did he marry? The happy French, smilingly following one another in a long procession headed by the loud and empty Napoleon Peyrat, say, Olympe Dunoyer, Voltaire's old flame. Vacquerie even thinks that they were rivals, and is very French and very literary and very silly in his comments. Now I may almost say it consists with my knowledge that all this has not a shadow to rest upon. It is very odd and very annoying; I have splendid materials for Cavalier till he comes to my own country; and there, though he continues to advance in the service, he becomes entirely invisible to me. Any information about him will be greatly welcome: I may mention that I know as much as I desire about the other prophets, Marion, Fage, Cavalier (de Sonne), my Cavalier's cousin, the unhappy Lions, and the idiotic Mr. Lacy; so if any erudite starts upon that track, you may choke him off. If you can find aught for me, or if you will but try, count on my undying gratitude. Lang's "Library" is very pleasant reading. My book *will* reach you soon, for I write about it to-day.—Yours ever,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

Work on a series of tales of terror, or, as he called them, "crawlers," planned in collaboration with his wife, soon superseded for the moment other literary interests in his mind. *Thrawn Janet* and the *Body-Snatchers* were the only two of the set completed under their original titles: *The Wreck of the Susanna* contained, I think, the germ of *The Merry Men.*

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry [*June* 1881].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—*The Black Man and Other Tales.*

The Black Man:
  I. Thrawn Janet.
  II. The Devil on Cramond Sands.
The Shadow on the Bed.
The Body-Snatchers.
The Case Bottle.
The King's Horn.
The Actor's Wife.
The Wreck of the Susanna.

This is the new work on which I am engaged with Fanny; they are all supernatural. *Thrawn Janet* is off to Stephen, but as it is all in Scotch he cannot take it, I know. It was *so good,* I could not help sending it. My health improves. We have a lovely spot here: a little green glen with a burn, a wonderful burn, gold and green and snow-white, singing loud and low in different steps of its career, now pouring over miniature crags, now fretting itself to death in a maze of rocky stairs and pots; never was so sweet a little river. Behind, great purple moorlands reaching to Ben Vrackie. Hunger lives here, alone with larks and sheep. Sweet spot, sweet spot.

Write me a word about Bob's professoriate and Landor, and what you think of *The Black Man.* The tales are all ghastly. *Thrawn Janet* frightened me to death. There will maybe be another—*The Dead Man's Letter.* I believe I shall recover; and I am, in this blessed hope, yours exuberantly,

R. L. S.

To Professor Æneas Mackay

This and the next four or five letters refer to the candidature of R. L. S. for the Edinburgh Chair.

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry,
Wednesday, June 21, 1881.

MY DEAR MACKAY,—What is this I hear?—that you are retiring from your chair. It is not, I hope, from ill-health?

But if you are retiring, may I ask if you have promised your support to any successor? I have a great mind to try. The summer session would suit me; the chair would suit me—if only I would suit it; I certainly should work it hard: that I can promise. I only wish it were a few years from now, when I hope to have something more substantial to show for myself. Up to the present time, all that I have published, even bordering on history, has been in an occasional form, and I fear this is much against me.

Please let me hear a word in answer, and believe me, yours very sincerely, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Professor Æneas Mackay

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry [*June* 1881].

MY DEAR MACKAY,—Thank you very much for your kind letter, and still more for your good opinion. You are not the only one who has regretted my absence from your lectures; but you were to me, then, only a part of a mangle through which I was being slowly and unwillingly dragged—part of a course which I had not chosen—part, in a word, of an organised boredom.

I am glad to have your reasons for giving up the chair; they are partly pleasant, and partly honourable to you. And I think one may say that every man who publicly

declines a plurality of offices, makes it perceptibly more difficult for the next man to accept them.

Every one tells me that I come too late upon the field, every one being pledged, which, seeing it is yet too early for any one to come upon the field, I must regard as a polite evasion. Yet all advise me to stand, as it might serve me against the next vacancy. So stand I shall, unless things are changed. As it is, with my health this summer class is a great attraction; it is perhaps the only hope I may have of a permanent income. I had supposed the needs of the chair might be met by choosing every year some period of history in which questions of Constitional Law were involved; but this is to look too far forward.

I understand (1*st*) that no overt steps can be taken till your resignation is accepted; and (2*nd*) that in the meantime I may, without offence, mention my design to stand.

If I am mistaken about these, please correct me as I do not wish to appear where I should not.

Again thanking you very heartily for your coals of fire I remain yours very sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry [*June* 1881].

MY DEAR S. C.,—Great and glorious news. Your friend, the bold unfearing chap, Aims at a professorial cap, And now besieges, do and dare, The Edinburgh History chair. Three months in summer only it Will bind him to that windy bit; The other nine to arrange abroad, Untrammel'd in the eye of God. Mark in particular one thing: He means to work that cursed thing, and to the golden youth explain Scotland and England, France and Spain.

In short, sir, I mean to try for this chair. I do believe I can make something out of it. It will be a pulpit in a sense; for I am nothing if not moral, as you know. My works are unfortunately so light and trifling they may interfere. But if you think, as I think, I am fit to fight it, send me the best kind of testimonial stating all you can in favour of me and, with your best art, turning the difficulty of my never having done anything in history, strictly speaking. Second, is there anybody else, think you, from whom I could wring one—I mean, you could wring one for me. Any party in London or Cambridge who thinks well enough of my little books to back me up with a few heartfelt words? Jenkin approves highly; but says, pile in *English* testimonials. Now I only know Stephen, Symonds, Lang, Gosse and you, and Meredith, to be sure. The chair is in the gift of the Faculty of Advocates, where I believe I am more wondered at than loved. I do not know the foundation; one or two hundred, I suppose. But it would be a good thing for me, out and out good. Help me to live, help me to *work*, for I am the better of pressure, and help me to say what I want about God, man and life. R. L. S.

Heart-broken trying to write rightly to people.

History and Constitutional Law is the full style.

To Edmund Gosse

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry, June 24, 1881.

MY DEAR GOSSE,—I wonder if I misdirected my last to you. I begin to fear it. I hope, however, this will go right. I am in act to do a mad thing—to stand for the Edinburgh Chair of History; it is elected for by the advocates, *quorum pars;* I am told that I am too late this year; but advised on all hands to go on, as it is likely soon to be once more vacant; and I shall have done myself good for the next time. Now, if I got the

thing (which I cannot, it appears), I believe, in spite of all my imperfections, I could be decently effectual. If you can think so also, do put it in a testimonial.

Heavens! *Je me sauve*, I have something else to say to you, but after that (which is not a joke) I shall keep it for another shoot.—Yours testimonially,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

I surely need not add, dear lad, that if you don't feel like it, you will only have to pacify me by a long letter on general subjects, when I shall hasten to respond in recompense for my assault upon the postal highway.

TO CHARLES J. GUTHRIE

The next two letters are addressed to an old friend and fellow-member of the Speculative Society, who had passed Advocate six years before, on the same day as R. L. S. himself, and is now Lord Guthrie, a Senator of the Scottish Courts of Justice, and has Swanston Cottage, sacred to the memory of R. L. S., for his summer home.

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry, June 30, 1881.

MY DEAR GUTHRIE,—I propose to myself to stand for Mackay's chair. I can promise that I will not spare to work. If you can see your way to help me, I shall be glad; and you may at least not mind making my candidature known.—Believe me, yours sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO CHARLES J. GUTHRIE

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry, July 2nd, 1881.

MY DEAR GUTHRIE,—Many thanks for your support, and many more for the kindness and thoughtfulness of your letter. I shall take your advice in both directions; presuming that by "electors" you mean the curators. I must see to this soon; and I feel it would also do no harm

to look in at the P.H.[1] As soon then as I get through with a piece of work that both sits upon me like a stone and attracts me like a piece of travel, I shall come to town and go a-visiting. Testimonial-hunting is a queer form of sport—but has its pleasures.

If I got that chair, the Spec. would have a warm defender near at hand! The sight of your fist made me Speculative on the past.—Yours most sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To EDMUND GOSSE

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry [*July* 1881].

MY DEAR WEG,—Many thanks for the testimonial; many thanks for your blind, wondering letter; many wishes, lastly, for your swift recovery. Insomnia is the opposite pole from my complaint; which brings with it a nervous lethargy, an unkind, unwholesome, and ungentle somnolence, fruitful in heavy heads and heavy eyes at morning. You cannot sleep; well, I can best explain my state thus: I cannot wake. Sleep, like the lees of a posset, lingers all day, lead-heavy, in my knees and ankles. Weight on the shoulders, torpor on the brain. And there is more than too much of that from an ungrateful hound who is now enjoying his first decently competent and peaceful weeks for close upon two years; happy in a big brown moor behind him, and an incomparable burn by his side; happy, above all, in some work—for at last I am at work with that appetite and confidence that alone makes work supportable.

I told you I had something else to say. I am very tedious—it is another request. In August and a good part of September we shall be in Braemar, in a house with some accommodation. Now Braemar is a place patronised by the royalty of the Sister Kingdoms—Victoria and the

[1] Parliament House.

Cairngorms, sir, honouring that countryside by their conjunct presence. This seems to me the spot for A Bard. Now can you come to see us for a little while? I can promise you, you must like my father, because you are a human being; you ought to like Braemar, because of your avocation; and you ought to like me, because I like you; and again, you must like my wife, because she likes cats; and as for my mother—well, come and see, what do you think? that is best. Mrs. Gosse, my wife tells me, will have other fish to fry; and to be plain, I should not like to ask her till I had seen the house. But a lone man I know we shall be equal to. *Qu'en dis tu? Viens.*—Yours, R. L. S.

To P. G. Hamerton

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry [*July* 1881].

MY DEAR MR. HAMMERTON,—(There goes the second M.; it is a certainty.) Thank you for your prompt and kind answer, little as I deserved it, though I hope to show you I was less undeserving than I seemed. But just might I delete two words in your testimonial? The two words "and legal" were unfortunately winged by chance against my weakest spot, and would go far to damn me.

It was not my bliss that I was interested in when I was married; it was a sort of marriage *in extremis;* and if I am where I am, it is thanks to the care of that lady who married me when I was a mere complication of cough and bones, much fitter for an emblem of mortality than a bridegroom.

I had a fair experience of that kind of illness when all the women (God bless them!) turn round upon the streets and look after you with a look that is only too kind not to be cruel. I have had nearly two years of more or less prostration. I have done no work whatever since the

February before last until quite of late. To be precise, until the beginning of last month, exactly two essays. All last winter I was at Davos ; and indeed I am home here just now against the doctor's orders, and must soon be back again to that unkindly haunt "upon the mountains visitant"—there goes no angel there but the angel of death.[1] The deaths of last winter are still sore spots to me. . . . So, you see, I am not very likely to go on a "wild expedition," cis-Stygian at least. The truth is, I am scarce justified in standing for the chair, though I hope you will not mention this ; and yet my health is one of my reasons, for the class is in summer.

I hope this statement of my case will make my long neglect appear less unkind. It was certainly not because I ever forgot you, or your unwonted kindness ; and it was not because I was in any sense rioting in pleasures.

I am glad to hear the catamaran is on her legs again ; you have my warmest wishes for a good cruise down the Saône ; and yet there comes some envy to that wish, for when shall I go cruising ? Here a sheer hulk, alas ! lies R. L. S. But I will continue to hope for a better time, canoes that will sail better to the wind, and a river grander than the Saône.

I heard, by the way, in a letter of counsel from a well-wisher, one reason of my town's absurdity about the chair of Art:[2] I fear it is characteristic of her manners. It was because you did not call upon the electors !

Will you remember me to Mrs. Hamerton and your son ?—And believe me, etc., etc.,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

[1] "He knew the rocks where angels haunt,
Upon the mountains visitant."
Wordsworth's *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle.*

[2] Mr. Hamerton had been an unsuccessful candidate for the Professorship of Fine Art at Edinburgh University.

To Sidney Colvin

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry [*July* 1881].

MY DEAR COLVIN,—I do believe I am better, mind and body; I am tired just now, for I have just been up the burn with Wogg, daily growing better and boo'f'ler; so do not judge my state by my style in this. I am working steady, four Cornhill pages scrolled every day, besides the correspondence about this chair, which is heavy in itself. My first story, *Thrawn Janet*, all in Scotch, is accepted by Stephen; my second, *The Body Snatchers*, is laid aside in a justifiable disgust, the tale being horrid; my third, *The Merry Men*, I am more than half through, and think real well of. It is a fantastic sonata about the sea and wrecks; and I like it much above all my other attempts at story-telling; I think it is strange; if ever I shall make a hit, I have the line now, as I believe.

Fanny has finished one of hers, *The Shadow on the Bed*, and is now hammering at a second, for which we have "no name" as yet—not by Wilkie Collins.

Tales for Winter Nights. Yes, that, I think, we will call the lot of them when republished.

Why have you not sent me a testimonial? Everybody else but you has responded, and Symonds, but I'm afraid he's ill. Do think, too, if anybody else would write me a testimonial. I am told quantity goes far. I have good ones from Rev. Professor Campbell, Professor Meiklejohn, Leslie Stephen, Lang, Gosse, and a very shaky one from Hamerton.

Grant is an elector, so can't, but has written me kindly. From Tulloch I have not yet heard. Do help me with suggestions. This old chair, with its £250 and its light work, would make me.

It looks as if we should take Cater's chalet [1] after all; but O! to go back to that place, it seems cruel. I have

[1] The Chalet am Stein (or Chalet Buol) at Davos.

not yet received the Landor; but it may be at home, detained by my mother, who returns to-morrow.

Believe me, dear Colvin, ever yours, R. L. S.

Yours came; the class is in summer; many thanks for the testimonial, it is bully; arrived along with it another from Symonds, also bully; he is ill, but not lungs, thank God—fever got in Italy. We *have* taken Cater's chalet; so we are now the aristo's of the valley. There is no hope for me, but if there were, you would hear sweetness and light streaming from my lips.

The Merry Men.

Chap. I. Eilean Aros.
II. What the Wreck had brought to Aros.
III. Past and Present in Sandag Bay.
IV. The Gale.
V. A Man out of the Sea.

} Tip Top Tale.

To W. E. Henley

Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry, July 1881.

MY DEAR HENLEY,—I hope, then, to have a visit from you. If before August, here; if later, at Braemar. Tupe!

And now, *mon bon*, I must babble about *The Merry Men*, my favourite work. It is a fantastic sonata about the sea and wrecks. Chapter I. "Eilean Aros"—the island, the roost, the "merry men," the three people there living—sea superstitions. Chapter II. "What the Wreck had brought to Aros." Eh, boy? what had it? Silver and clocks and brocades, and what a conscience, what a mad brain! Chapter III. "Past and Present in Sandag Bay"—the new wreck and the old—so old—the Armada treasure-ship, Sant^{ma} Trini^{d}—the grave in the heather—

strangers there. Chapter IV. "The Gale"—the doomed ship—the storm—the drunken madman on the head—cries in the night. Chapter V. "A Man out of the Sea." But I must not breathe to you my plot. It is, I fancy, my first real shoot at a story; an odd thing, sir, but, I believe, my own, though there is a little of Scott's *Pirate* in it, as how should there not? He had the root of romance in such places. Aros is Earraid, where I lived lang syne;[1] the Ross of Grisapol is the Ross of Mull; Ben Ryan, Ben More. I have written to the middle of Chapter IV. Like enough, when it is finished I shall discard all chapterings; for the thing is written straight through. It must, unhappily, be re-written—too well written not to be.

The chair is only three months in summer; that is why I try for it. If I get it, which I shall not, I should be independent at once. Sweet thought. I liked your Byron well; your Berlioz better. No one would remark these cuts; even I, who was looking for it, knew it not at all to be a torso. The paper strengthens me in my recommendation to you to follow Colvin's hint. Give us an 1830; you will do it well, and the subject smiles widely on the world:—

1830: *A Chapter of Artistic History*, by William Ernest Henley (or *of Social and Artistic History*, as the thing might grow to you). Sir, you might be in the Athenæum yet with that; and, believe me, you might and would be far better, the author of a readable book.—Yours ever,

R. L. S.

The following names have been invented for Wogg by his dear papa:—

Grunty-pig (when he is scratched),
Rose-mouth (when he comes flying up with his rose-leaf tongue depending), and
Hoofen-boots (when he has had his foots wet).
How would *Tales for Winter Nights* do?

[1] In the summer of 1870: see above, pp. 24–30, and the essay *Memories of an Islet* in *Memories and Portraits*.

To W. E. Henley

The spell of good health did not last long, and with a break of the weather came a return of catarrhal troubles and hemorrhage. This letter answers some criticisms made by his correspondent on *The Merry Men* as drafted in MS.

Pitlochry, if you please [*August*], 1881.

DEAR HENLEY,—To answer a point or two. First, the Spanish ship was sloop-rigged and clumsy, because she was fitted out by some private adventurers, not over wealthy, and glad to take what they could get. Is that not right? Tell me if you think not. That, at least, was how I meant it. As for the boat-cloaks, I am afraid they are, as you say, false imagination; but I love the name, nature, and being of them so dearly, that I feel as if I would almost rather ruin a story than omit the reference. The proudest moments of my life have been passed in the stern-sheets of a boat with that romantic garment over my shoulders. This, without prejudice to one glorious day when standing upon some water stairs at Lerwick I signalled with my pocket-handkerchief for a boat to come ashore for me. I was then aged fifteen or sixteen; conceive my glory.

Several of the phrases you object to are proper nautical, or long-shore phrases, and therefore, I think, not out of place in this long-shore story. As for the two members which you thought at first so ill-united; I confess they seem perfectly so to me. I have chosen to sacrifice a long-projected story of adventure because the sentiment of that is identical with the sentiment of "My uncle." My uncle himself is not the story as I see it, only the leading episode of that story. It's really a story of wrecks, as they appear to the dweller on the coast. It's a view of the sea. Goodness knows when I shall be able to re-write; I must first get over this copper-headed cold.

R. L. S.

To Sidney Colvin

The reference to Landor in the following is to a volume of mine in Macmillan's series *English Men of Letters*. This and the next two or three years were those of the Fenian dynamite outrages at the Tower of London, the House of Lords, etc.

[*Kinnaird Cottage, Pitlochry, August* 1881.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—This is the first letter I have written this good while. I have had a brutal cold, not perhaps very wisely treated; lots of blood—for me, I mean. I was so well, however, before, that I seem to be sailing through with it splendidly. My appetite never failed; indeed, as I got worse, it sharpened—a sort of reparatory instinct. Now I feel in a fair way to get round soon.

Monday, August (2*nd*, is it?).—We set out for the Spital of Glenshee, and reach Braemar on Tuesday. The Braemar address we cannot learn; it looks as if "Braemar" were all that was necessary; if particular, you can address 17 Heriot Row. We shall be delighted to see you whenever, and as soon as ever, you can make it possible.

. . . I hope heartily you will survive me, and do not doubt it. There are seven or eight people it is no part of my scheme in life to survive—yet if I could but heal me of my bellowses, I could have a jolly life—have it, even now, when I can work and stroll a little, as I have been doing till this cold. I have so many things to make life sweet to me, it seems a pity I cannot have that other one thing—health. But though you will be angry to hear it, I believe, for myself at least, what is is best. I believed it all through my worst days, and I am not ashamed to profess it now.

Landor has just turned up; but I had read him already. I like him extremely; I wonder if the "cuts" were perhaps not advantageous. It seems quite full enough; but then you know I am a compressionist.

If I am to criticise, it is a little staid; but the classical is apt to look so. It is in curious contrast to that in-

expressive, unplanned wilderness of Forster's; clear, readable, precise, and sufficiently human. I see nothing lost in it, though I could have wished, in my Scotch capacity, a trifle clearer and fuller exposition of his moral attitude, which is not quite clear "from here."

He and his tyrannicide! I am in a mad fury about these explosions. If that is the new world! Damn O'Donovan Rossa; damn him behind and before, above, below, and roundabout; damn, deracinate, and destroy him, root and branch, self and company, world without end. Amen. I write that for sport if you like, but I will pray in earnest, O Lord, if you cannot convert, kindly delete him!

Stories naturally at halt. Henley has seen one and approves. I believe it to be good myself, even real good. He has also seen and approved one of Fanny's. It will make a good volume. We have now

Thrawn Janet (with Stephen), proof to-day.
The Shadow on the Bed (Fanny's copying).
The Merry Men (scrolled).
The Body Snatchers (scrolled).

In germis

The Travelling Companion.
The Torn Surplice (*not final title*).

Yours ever, R. L. S.

To Dr. Alexander Japp

Dr. Japp (known in literature at this date and for some time afterwards under his pseudonym H. A. Page; later under his own name the biographer of De Quincey) had written to R. L. S. criticising statements of fact and opinion in his essay on Thoreau, and expressing the hope that they might meet and discuss their differences. In the interval between the last letter and this Stevenson with all his family had moved to Braemar.

The Cottage, Castleton of Braemar,
Sunday [*August* 1881].

MY DEAR SIR,—I should long ago have written to thank you for your kind and frank letter; but in my

state of health papers are apt to get mislaid, and your letter has been vainly hunted for until this (Sunday) morning.

I regret I shall not be able to see you in Edinburgh; one visit to Edinburgh has already cost me too dear in that invaluable particular health; but if it should be at all possible for you to push on as far as Braemar, I believe you would find an attentive listener, and I can offer you a bed, a drive, and necessary food, etc.

If, however, you should not be able to come thus far, I can promise you two things: First, I shall religiously revise what I have written, and bring out more clearly the point of view from which I regarded Thoreau; second, I shall in the Preface record your objection.

The point of view (and I must ask you not to forget that any such short paper is essentially only a *section through* a man) was this: I desired to look at the man through his books. Thus, for instance, when I mentioned his return to the pencil-making, I did it only in passing (perhaps I was wrong), because it seemed to me not an illustration of his principles, but a brave departure from them. Thousands of such there were I do not doubt; still, they might be hardly to my purpose, though, as you say so, some of them would be.

Our difference as to pity I suspect was a logomachy of my making. No pitiful acts on his part would surprise me; I know he would be more pitiful in practice than most of the whiners; but the spirit of that practice would still seem to be unjustly described by the word pity.

When I try to be measured, I find myself usually suspected of a sneaking unkindness for my subject; but you may be sure, sir, I would give up most other things to be so good a man as Thoreau. Even my knowledge of him leads me thus far.

Should you find yourself able to push on to Braemar—it may even be on your way—believe me, your visit will be most welcome. The weather is cruel, but the place

is, as I dare say you know, the very "wale" of Scotland —bar Tummelside.—Yours very sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO MRS. SITWELL

The Cottage, Castleton of Braemar,
[*August* 1881].

. . . WELL, I have been pretty mean, but I have not yet got over my cold so completely as to have recovered much energy. It is really extraordinary that I should have recovered as well as I have in this blighting weather; the wind pipes, the rain comes in squalls, great black clouds are continually overhead, and it is as cold as March. The country is delightful, more cannot be said; it is very beautiful, a perfect joy when we get a blink of sun to see it in. The Queen knows a thing or two, I perceive; she has picked out the finest habitable spot in Britain.

I have done no work, and scarce written a letter for three weeks, but I think I should soon begin again; my cough is now very trifling. I eat well, and seem to have lost but little flesh in the meanwhile. I was *wonderfully* well before I caught this horrid cold. I never thought I should have been as well again; I really enjoyed life and work; and, of course, I now have a good hope that this may return.

I suppose you heard of our ghost stories. They are somewhat delayed by my cold and a bad attack of laziness, embroidery, etc., under which Fanny had been some time prostrate. It is horrid that we can get no better weather. I did not get such good accounts of you as might have been. You must imitate me. I am now one of the most conscientious people at trying to get better you ever saw. I have a white hat, it is much admired; also a plaid, and a heavy stoop; so I take my walks abroad, witching the world.

Last night I was beaten at chess, and am still grinding under the blow.—Ever your faithful friend, R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

The Cottage (late the late Miss M'Gregor's), Castleton of Braemar, August 10, 1881.

MY DEAR GOSSE,—Come on the 24th, there is a dear fellow. Everybody else wants to come later, and it will be a godsend for, sir—Yours sincerely.

You can stay as long as you behave decently, and are not sick of, sir—Your obedient, humble servant.

We have family worship in the home of, sir—Yours respectfully.

Braemar is a fine country, but nothing to (what you will also see) the maps of, sir—Yours in the Lord.

A carriage and two spanking hacks draw up daily at the hour of two before the house of, sir—Yours truly.

The rain rains and the winds do beat upon the cottage of the late Miss Macgregor and of, sir—Yours affectionately.

It is to be trusted that the weather may improve ere you know the halls of, sir—Yours emphatically.

All will be glad to welcome you, not excepting, sir—Yours ever.

You will now have gathered the lamentable intellectual collapse of, sir—Yours indeed.

And nothing remains for me but to sign myself, sir—Yours, Robert Louis Stevenson.

N.B.—Each of these clauses has to be read with extreme glibness, coming down whack upon the "Sir." This is very important. The fine stylistic inspiration will else be lost.

I commit the man who made, the man who sold, and the woman who supplied me with my present excruciating gilt nib to that place where the worm never dies.

The reference to a deceased Highland lady (tending

as it does to foster unavailing sorrow) may be with advantage omitted from the address, which would therefore run—The Cottage, Castleton of Braemar.

To Edmund Gosse

The Cottage, Castleton of Braemar,
August 19, 1881.

If you had an uncle who was a sea captain and went to the North Pole, you had better bring his outfit. *Verbum Sapientibus.* I look towards you.

R. L. Stevenson.

To Edmund Gosse

[*Braemar, August* 19, 1881.]

my dear weg,—I have by an extraordinary drollery of Fortune sent off to you by this day's post a P.C. inviting you to appear in sealskin. But this had reference to the weather, and not at all, as you may have been led to fancy, to our rustic raiment of an evening.

As to that question, I would deal, in so far as in me lies, fairly with all men. We are not dressy people by nature; but it sometimes occurs to us to entertain angels. In the country, I believe, even angels may be decently welcomed in tweed; I have faced many great personages, for my own part, in a tasteful suit of sea-cloth with an end of carpet pending from my gullet. Still, we do maybe twice a summer burst out in the direction of blacks—and yet we do it seldom. In short, let your own heart decide, and the capacity of your portmanteau. If you came in camel's hair, you would still, although conspicuous, be welcome.

The sooner the better after Tuesday.—Yours ever,

Robert Louis Stevenson.

To W. E. Henley

The following records the beginning of work upon *Treasure Island*, the name originally proposed for which was *The Sea Cook* :—

[*Braemar, August* 25, 1881.]

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Of course I am a rogue. Why, Lord, it's known, man ; but you should remember I have had a horrid cold. Now, I'm better, I think ; and see here—nobody, not you, nor Lang, nor the devil, will hurry me with our crawlers. They are coming. Four of them are as good as done, and the rest will come when ripe ; but I am now on another lay for the moment, purely owing to Lloyd, this one ; but I believe there's more coin in it than in any amount of crawlers : now, see here, *The Sea Cook, or Treasure Island : A Story for Boys.*

If this don't fetch the kids, why, they have gone rotten since my day. Will you be surprised to learn that it is about Buccaneers, that it begins in the " Admiral Benbow " public-house on Devon coast, that it's all about a map, and a treasure, and a mutiny, and a derelict ship, and a current, and a fine old Squire Trelawney (the real Tre, purged of literature and sin, to suit the infant mind), and a doctor, and another doctor, and a sea cook with one leg, and a sea-song with the chorus " Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum " (at the third Ho you heave at the capstan bars), which is a real buccaneer's song, only known to the crew of the late Captain Flint (died of rum at Key West, much regretted, friends will please accept this intimation) ; and lastly, would you be surprised to hear, in this connection, the name of *Routledge ?* That's the kind of man I am, blast your eyes. Two chapters are written, and have been tried on Lloyd with great success ; the trouble is to work it off without oaths. Buccaneers without oaths—bricks without straw. But youth and the fond parient have to be consulted.

And now look here—this is next day—and three chapters are written and read. (Chapter I. The Old Sea-dog at the "Admiral Benbow." Chapter II. Black Dog appears and disappears. Chapter III. The Black Spot.) All now heard by Lloyd, F., and my father and mother, with high approval. It's quite silly and horrid fun, and what I want is the *best* book about the Buccaneers that can be had—the latter B's above all, Blackbeard and sich, and get Nutt or Bain to send it skimming by the fastest post. And now I know you'll write to me, for *The Sea Cook's* sake.

Your Admiral Guinea is curiously near my line, but of course I'm fooling; and your Admiral sounds like a shublime gent, Stick to him like wax—he'll do. My Trelawney is, as I indicate, several thousand sea-miles off the lie of the original or your Admiral Guinea; and besides, I have no more about him yet but one mention of his name, and I think it likely he may turn yet farther from the model in the course of handling. A chapter a day I mean to do; they are short; and perhaps in a month *The Sea Cook* may to Routledge go, yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum! My Trelawney has a strong dash of Landor, as I see him from here. No women in the story, Lloyd's orders; and who so blithe to obey? It's awful fun boys' stories; you just indulge the pleasure of your heart, that's all; no trouble, no strain. The only stiff thing is to get it ended—that I don't see, but I look to a volcano. O sweet, O generous, O human toils. You would like my blind beggar in Chapter III. I believe; no writing, just drive along as the words come and the pen will scratch!

R. L. S.
Author of Boys' Stories.

To Dr. Alexander Japp

This correspondent had paid his visit as proposed, discussed the Thoreau differences, listened delightedly to the first chapters of

Treasure Island, and proposed to offer the story for publication to his friend Mr. Henderson, proprietor and editor of Young Folks.

[*Braemar, September* 1881.]

MY DEAR DR. JAPP,—My father has gone, but I think I may take it upon me to ask you to keep the book. Of all things you could do to endear yourself to me, you have done the best, for my father and you have taken a fancy to each other.

I do not know how to thank you for all your kind trouble in the matter of *The Sea Cook*, but I am not unmindful. My health is still poorly, and I have added intercostal rheumatism—a new attraction—which sewed me up nearly double for two days, and still gives me a list to starboard—let us be ever nautical!

I do not think with the start I have there will be any difficulty in letting Mr. Henderson go ahead whenever he likes. I will write my story up to its legitimate conclusion; and then we shall be in a position to judge whether a sequel would be desirable, and I would then myself know better about its practicability from the story-teller's point of view.—Yours ever very sincerely,

R. L. STEVENSON.

To W. E. HENLEY

This tells of the farther progress of *Treasure Island*, of the price paid for it, and of the modest hopes with which it was launched. "The poet" is Mr. Gosse. The project of a highway story, *Jerry Abershaw*, remained a favourite one with Stevenson until it was superseded three or four years later by another, that of the *Great North Road*, which in its turn had to be abandoned, from lack of health and leisure, after some six or eight chapters had been written.

Braemar, September 1881.

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Thanks for your last. The £100 fell through, or dwindled at least into somewhere about £30. However, that I've taken as a mouthful, so you may look out for *The Sea Cook, or Treasure Island: A Tale of the Buccaneers*, in Young Folks. (The terms are

£2, 10s. a page of 4500 words; that's not noble, is it? But I have my copyright safe. I don't get illustrated—a blessing; that's the price I have to pay for my copyright.)

I'll make this boys' book business pay; but I have to make a beginning. When I'm done with Young Folks, I'll try Routledge or some one. I feel pretty sure the *Sea Cook* will do to reprint, and bring something decent at that.

Japp is a good soul. The poet was very gay and pleasant. He told me much: he is simply the most active young man in England, and one of the most intelligent. "He shall o'er Europe, shall o'er earth extend." [1] He is now extending over adjacent parts of Scotland.

I propose to follow up *The Sea Cook* at proper intervals by *Jerry Abershaw: A Tale of Putney Heath* (which or its site I must visit): *The Leading Light: A Tale of the Coast, The Squaw Men: or the Wild West,* and other instructive and entertaining work. *Jerry Abershaw* should be good, eh? I love writing boys' books. This first is only an experiment; wait till you see what I can make 'em with my hand in. I'll be the Harrison Ainsworth of the future; and a chalk better by St. Christopher; or at least as good. You'll see that even by *The Sea Cook.*

Jerry Abershaw—O what a title! Jerry Abershaw: d—n it, sir, it's a poem. The two most lovely words in English; and what a sentiment! Hark you, how the hoofs ring! Is this a blacksmith's? No, it's a wayside inn. Jerry Abershaw. "It was a clear, frosty evening, not 100 miles from Putney," etc. Jerry Abershaw. Jerry Abershaw. Jerry Abershaw. *The Sea Cook* is now in its sixteenth chapter, and bids for well up in the thirties. Each three chapters is worth £2, 10s. So we've £12, 10s. already.

Don't read Marryat's *Pirate* anyhow; it is written in sand with a salt-spoon: arid, feeble, vain, tottering pro-

[1] From Landor's *Gebir:* the line refers to Napoleon Bonaparte.

duction. But then we're not always all there. *He* was *all* somewhere else that trip. It's *damnable*, Henley. I don't go much on *The Sea Cook;* but, Lord, it's a little fruitier than the *Pirate* by Cap'n. Marryat.

Since this was written *The Cook* is in his nineteenth chapter. Yo-heave ho! R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

Stevenson's uncle, Dr. George Balfour, had recommended him to wear a specially contrived and hideous respirator for the inhalation of pine-oil.

Braemar, 1881.

Dear Henley, with a pig's snout on
I am starting for London,
Where I likely shall arrive,
On Saturday, if still alive:
Perhaps your pirate doctor might
See me on Sunday? If all's right,
I should then lunch with you and with she
Who's dearer to you than you are to me.
I shall remain but little time
In London, as a wretched clime,
But not so wretched (for none are)
As that of beastly old Braemar.
My doctor sends me skipping. I
Have many facts to meet your eye.
My pig's snout's now upon my face;
And I inhale with fishy grace,
My gills outflapping right and left,
Ol. pin. sylvest. I am bereft
Of a great deal of charm by this—
Not quite the bull's eye for a kiss—
But like a gnome of olden time
Or bogey in a pantomime.
For ladies' love I once was fit,
But now am rather out of it.

Where'er I go, revolted curs
Snap round my military spurs;
The children all retire in fits
And scream their bellowses to bits.
Little I care: the worst's been done:
Now let the cold impoverished sun
Drop frozen from his orbit; let
Fury and fire, cold, wind and wet,
And cataclysmal mad reverses
Rage through the federate universes;
Let Lawson triumph, cakes and ale,
Whisky and hock and claret fail;—
Tobacco, love, and letters perish,
With all that any man could cherish:
You it may touch, not me. I dwell
Too deep already—deep in hell;
And nothing can befall, O damn!
To make me uglier than I am.

R. L. S.

This-yer refers to an ori-nasal respirator for the inhalation of pine-wood oil, *oleum pini sylvestris.*

To Thomas Stevenson

With all his throat and lung troubles actively renewed, Stevenson fled to Davos again in October. This time he and his wife and stepson occupied a small house by themselves, the Chalet am Stein, near the Buol Hotel. The election to the Edinburgh Professorship was still pending, and the following note to his father shows that he thought for a moment of giving the electors a specimen of his qualifications in the shape of a magazine article on the Appin murder—a theme afterwards turned to more vital account in the tales of *Kidnapped* and *Catriona.*

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos, October* 1881.]

MY DEAR FATHER,—It occurred to me last night in bed that I could write

The Murder of Red Colin,
A Story of the Forfeited Estates.

This I have all that is necessary for, with the following exceptions :—

Trials of the Sons of Roy Rob with Anecdotes : Edinburgh, 1818, and

The second volume of Blackwood's Magazine.

You might also look in Arnot's *Criminal Trials* up in my room, and see what observations he has on the case (Trial of James Stewart in Appin for murder of Campbell of Glenure, 1752) ; if he has none, perhaps you could see —O yes, see if Burton has it in his two vols. of trial stories. I hope he hasn't ; but care not ; do it over again anyway.

The two named authorities I must see. With these, I could soon pull off this article ; and it shall be my first for the electors.—Ever affectionate son, R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

Some of the habitual readers of Young Folks had written objecting to the early instalments of *Treasure Island*, and the editor had come forward in their defence.

Davos Printing Office, managed by Samuel Lloyd Osbourne & Co., The Chalet [*Nov.* 9, 1881].

DEAR WEG,—If you are taking Young Folks, for God's Sake Twig the editorial style ; it is incredible ; we are all left panting in the rear ; twig, O twig it. His name is Clinton ; I should say the most melodious prosewriter now alive ; it's like buttermilk and blacking ; it sings and hums away in that last sheet, like a great old kettle full of bilge water. You know : none of us could do it, boy. See No. 571, last page : an article called " Sir Claude the Conqueror," and read it *aloud* in your best rhythmic tones ; mon cher, c'est épatant.

Observe in the same number, how Will J. Shannon girds at your poor friend ; and how the rhythmic Clinton steps chivalrously forth in his defence. First the Rev.

Purcell; then Will J. Shannon: thick fall the barbéd arrows.[1]

I wish I could play a game of chess with you.

If I survive, I shall have Clinton to dinner: it is plain I must make hay while the sun shines; I shall not long keep a footing in the world of penny writers, or call them obolists. It is a world full of surprises, a romantic world. Weg, I was known there; even I. The obolists, then, sometimes peruse our works. It is only fair; since I so much batten upon theirs. Talking of which, in Heaven's name, get *The Bondage of Brandon* (3 vols.) by Bracebridge Hemming. It's the devil and all for drollery. There is a Superior (sic) of the Jesuits, straight out of Skelt.

And now look here, I had three points: Clinton—disposed of—(2nd) Benj. Franklin—do you want him? (3rd) A radiant notion begot this morning over an atlas: why not, you who know the lingo, give us a good legendary and historical book on Iceland? It would, or should, be as romantic as a book of Scott's; as strange and stirring as a dream. Think on't. My wife screamed with joy at the idea; and the little Lloyd clapped his hands; so I offer you three readers on the spot.

Fanny and I have both been in bed, tended by the hired sick nurse; Lloyd has a broken finger (so he did not clap his hands literally); Wogg has had an abscess in his ear; our servant is a devil.—I am yours ever, with both of our best regards to Mrs. Gosse,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON,
The Rejected Obolist.

To W. E. HENLEY

This letter speaks of contributions to the Magazine of Art (in these years edited by Mr. Henley) from J. A. Symonds and from

[1] The Editor's defence was in the following terms: "That which you condemn is really the best story now appearing in the paper, and the impress of an able writer is stamped on every paragraph of the *Treasure Island*. You will probably share this opinion when you have read a little more of it."

R. L. S. himself, "Bunyan" meaning the essay on the cuts in Bagster's edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. A toy press had just been set up in the chalet for the lad Lloyd.

Davos Printing Office, managed by Samuel Lloyd Osbourne & Co., The Chalet [*Nov.* 1881].

DEAR HENLEY,—I have done better for you than you deserved to hope; the Venice Medley is withdrawn; and I have a Monte Oliveto (short) for you, with photographs and sketches. I think you owe luck a candle; for this no skill could have accomplished without the aid of accident.

How about carving and gilding? I have nearly killed myself over Bunyan; and am too tired to finish him to-day, as I might otherwise have done. For his back is broken. For some reason, it proved one of the hardest things I ever tried to write; perhaps—but no—I have no theory to offer—it went against the spirit. But as I say I girt my loins up and nearly died of it.

In five weeks, six at the latest, I should have a complete proof of *Treasure Island*. It will be from 75 to 80,000 words; and with anything like half good pictures, it should sell. I suppose I may at least hope for eight pic's? I aspire after ten or twelve. You had better

—Two days later.

Bunyan skips to-day, pretty bad, always with an official letter. Yours came last night. I had already spotted your Dickens; very pleasant and true.

My wife is far from well; quite confined to bed now; drain poisoning. I keep getting better slowly; appetite dicky; but some days I feel and eat well. The weather has been hot and heartless and unDavosy.

I shall give Symonds his note in about an hour from now.

Have done so; he will write of Vesalius and of Botticelli's Dante for you.

Morris's *Sigurd* is a grrrrreat poem; that is so. I have cried aloud at this re-reading; he had fine stuff to

go on, but he has touched it, in places, with the hand of a master. Yes. Regin and Fafnir are incredibly fine.

Love to all.—Yours ever, R. L. S.

To P. G. Hamerton

The volume of republished essays here mentioned is *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*. "The silly story of the election" refers again to his correspondent's failure as a candidate for the Edinburgh Chair of Fine Arts.

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos, December* 1881.]

MY DEAR MR. HAMERTON,—My conscience has long been smiting me, till it became nearly chronic. My excuses, however, are many and not pleasant. Almost immediately after I last wrote to you, I had a hemorreage (I can't spell it), was badly treated by a doctor in the country, and have been a long while picking up—still, in fact, have much to desire on that side. Next, as soon as I got here, my wife took ill; she is, I fear, seriously so; and this combination of two invalids very much depresses both.

I have a volume of republished essays coming out with Chatto and Windus; I wish they would come, that my wife might have the reviews to divert her. Otherwise my news is *nil*. I am up here in a little chalet, on the borders of a pinewood, overlooking a great part of the Davos Thal, a beautiful scene at night, with the moon upon the snowy mountains, and the lights warmly shining in the village. J. A. Symonds is next door to me, just at the foot of my Hill Difficulty (this you will please regard as the House Beautiful), and his society is my great stand-by.

Did you see I had joined the band of the rejected? "Hardly one of us," said my *confrères* at the bar.

I was blamed by a common friend for asking you to give me a testimonial; in the circumstances he thought it was indelicate. Lest, by some calamity, you should

ever have felt the same way, I must say in two words how the matter appeared to me. That silly story of the election altered in no tittle the value of your testimony: so much for that. On the other hand, it led me to take quite a particular pleasure in asking you to give it; and so much for the other. I trust, even if you cannot share it, you will understand my view.

I am in treaty with Bentley for a life of Hazlitt; I hope it will not fall through, as I love the subject, and appear to have found a publisher who loves it also. That, I think, makes things more pleasant. You know I am a fervent Hazlittite; I mean regarding him as *the* English writer who has had the scantiest justice. Besides which, I am anxious to write biography; really, if I understand myself in quest of profit, I think it must be good to live with another man from birth to death. You have tried it, and know.

How has the cruising gone? Pray remember me to Mrs. Hamerton and your son, and believe me, yours very sincerely, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

TO CHARLES BAXTER

The memory here evoked of Brash the publican, who had been a special butt for some of the youthful pranks of R. L. S. and his friends, inspired in the next few weeks the sets of verses mentioned below (vol. 24, pp. 14, 15, 38) in letters which show that the fictitious Johnson and Thomson were far from being dead.

[*Chalet am Stein*], *Davos, December* 5, 1881.

MY DEAR CHARLES,—We have been in miserable case here; my wife worse and worse; and now sent away with Lloyd for sick nurse, I not being allowed to go down. I do not know what is to become of us; and you may imagine how rotten I have been feeling, and feel now, alone with my weasel-dog and my German maid, on the top of a hill here, heavy mist and thin snow all about me, and the devil to pay in general. I don't care so

much for solitude as I used to; results, I suppose, of marriage.

Pray write me something cheery. A little Edinburgh gossip, in Heaven's name. Ah! what would I not give to steal this evening with you through the big, echoing, college archway, and away south under the street lamps, and away to dear Brash's, now defunct! But the old time is dead also, never, never to revive. It was a sad time too, but so gay and so hopeful, and we had such sport with all our low spirits and all our distresses, that it looks like a kind of lamplit fairyland behind me. O for ten Edinburgh minutes—sixpence between us, and the ever-glorious Lothian Road, or dear mysterious Leith Walk! But here, a sheer hulk, lies poor Tom Bowling; here in this strange place, whose very strangeness would have been heaven to him then; and aspires, yes, C. B., with tears, after the past. See what comes of being left alone. Do you remember Brash? the sheet of glass that we followed along George Street? Granton? the night at Bonny mainhead? the compass near the sign of the *Twinkling Eye?* the night I lay on the pavement in misery?

I swear it by the eternal sky
Johnson—nor—Thomson ne'er shall die!

Yet I fancy they are dead too; dead like Brash.

R. L. S.

To Mrs. Thomas Stevenson

The next is after going down to meet his wife and stepson, when the former had left the doctor's hands at Berne.

Chalet Buol, Davos-Platz, December 26, 1881.

MY DEAR MOTHER,—Yesterday, Sunday and Christmas, we finished this eventful journey by a drive in an *open* sleigh—none others were to be had—seven hours on end through whole forests of Christmas trees. The cold was beyond belief. I have often suffered less at a dentist's.

It was a clear, sunny day, but the sun even at noon falls, at this season, only here and there into the Prättigau. I kept up as long as I could in an imitation of a street singer :—

"Away, ye gay landscapes, ye gardens of roses," etc.

At last Lloyd remarked, a blue mouth speaking from a corpse-coloured face, "You seem to be the only one with any courage left?" And, do you know, with that word my courage disappeared, and I made the rest of the stage in the same dumb wretchedness as the others. My only terror was lest Fanny should ask for brandy, or laudanum, or something. So awful was the idea of putting my hands out, that I half thought I would refuse.

Well, none of us are a penny the worse, Lloyd's cold better; I, with a twinge of the rheumatiz; and Fanny better than her ordinary.

General conclusion between Lloyd and me as to the journey: A prolonged visit to the dentist's, complicated with the fear of death.

Never, O never, do you get me there again.—Ever affectionate son, R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

Mr. Gosse and R. L. S. had proposed to Mr. R. W. Gilder, of the Century Magazine, that they should collaborate for him on a series of murder papers, beginning with the Elstree murder; and he had accepted the proposal on terms which they thought liberal.

Hotel Buol, Davos, Dec. 26th, 1881.

MY DEAR GOSSE,—I have just brought my wife back, through such cold, in an open sleigh too, as I had never fancied to exist. I won't use the word torture, but go to your dentist's and in nine cases out of ten you will not suffer more pain than we suffered.

This is merely in acknowledgment of your editorial: to say that I shall give my mind at once to the Murder. But I bethink me you can say so much and convey my

sense of the liberality of our Cousins, without exhibiting this scrawl. So I may go on to tell you that I have at last found a publisher as eager to publish, as I am to write a Hazlitt. Bentley is the Boy; and very liberal, at least, as per last advices; certainly very friendly and eager, which makes work light, like whistling. I wish I was with the rest of—well, of us—in the red books. But I am glad to get a whack at Hazlitt, howsoe'er.

How goes your Gray? I would not change with you; brother! Gray would never be suited to my temperament, while Hazlitt fits me like a glove.

I hope in your studies in Young Folks you did not miss the delicious reticences, the artistic concealments, and general fine-shade graduation, through which the fact of the Xmas Nr. being 3d. was instilled—too strong—inspired into the mind of the readers. It was superb.

I may add as a postscript: I wish to God I or anybody knew what was the matter with my wife.—Yours ever,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Sidney Colvin

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos-Platz, March* 1882.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,—Herewith *Moral Emblems*. The elephant by Fanny—the rest by me.

I would have sent it long ago. But I must explain. I brought home with me from my bad times in America two strains of unsoundness of mind, the first, a perpetual fear that I can do no more work—the second, a perpetual fear that my friends have quarrelled with me.* This last long silence of yours drove me into really believing it, and I dared not write to you.

Well, it's ancient history now, and here are the emblems. A second series is in the press.

Silverado is still unfinished; but I think I have done well on the whole, as you say. I shall be home, I hope,

sometime in May, perhaps before; it depends on Fanny's health, which is still far from good and often alarms me. I shall then see your collectanea. I shall not put pen to paper till I settle somewhere else; Hazlitt had better simmer awhile. I have to see Ireland too, who has most kindly written to me and invited me to see his collections.

Symonds grows much on me: in many ways, what you would least expect, a very sound man, and very wise in a wise way. It is curious how F. and I always turn to him for advice: we have learned that his advice is good. —Yours ever, R. L. S.

*I struggle as hard as I know how against both, but a judicious postcard would sometimes save me the expense of the second.

To Alison Cunningham

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos-Platz, February* 1882.]

MY DEAR CUMMY,—My wife and I are very much vexed to hear you are still unwell. We are both keeping far better; she especially seems quite to have taken a turn—*the* turn, we shall hope. Please let us know how you get on, and what has been the matter with you; Braemar I believe—the vile hole. You know what a lazy rascal I am, so you won't be surprised at a short letter, I know; indeed, you will be much more surprised at my having had the decency to write at all. We have got rid of our young, pretty, and incompetent maid; and now we have a fine, canny, twinkling, shrewd, auld-farrant peasant body, who gives us good food and keeps us in good spirits. If we could only understand what she says! But she speaks Davos language, which is to German what Aberdeen-awa' is to English, so it comes heavy. God bless you, my dear Cummy; and so says Fanny forbye.—Ever your affectionate, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Charles Baxter

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos*], 22*nd February* '82.

MY DEAR CHARLES,—Your most welcome letter has raised clouds of sulphur from my horizon. . . .

I am glad you have gone back to your music. Life is a poor thing, I am more and more convinced, without an art, that always waits for us and is always new. Art and marriage are two very good stand-by's.

In an article which will appear some time in the Cornhill, *Talk and Talkers*, and where I have full-lengthened the conversation of Bob, Henley, Jenkin, Simpson, Symonds, and Gosse, I have at the end one single word about yourself. It may amuse you to see it.

We are coming to Scotland after all, so we shall meet, which pleases me, and I do believe I am strong enough to stand it this time. My knee is still quite lame.

My wife is better again. . . . But we take it by turns; it is the dog that is ill now.—Ever yours, R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

In the early months of this year a hurt knee kept Stevenson more indoors than was good for him.

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos-Platz, February* 1882.]

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Here comes the letter as promised last night. And first two requests: Pray send the enclosed to c/o Blackmore's publisher, 'tis from Fanny; second, pray send us Routledge's shilling book, Edward Mayhew's *Dogs*, by return if it can be managed.

Our dog is very ill again, poor fellow, looks very ill too, only sleeps at night because of morphine; and we do not know what ails him, only fear it to be canker of the ear. He makes a bad, black spot in our life, poor, selfish, silly, little tangle; and my wife is wretched. Otherwise she is

better, steadily and slowly moving up through all her relapses. My knee never gets the least better; it hurts to-night, which it has not done for long. I do not suppose my doctor knows any least thing about it. He says it is a nerve that I struck, but I assure you he does not know.

I have just finished a paper, *A Gossip on Romance*, in which I have tried to do, very popularly, about one-half of the matter you wanted me to try. In a way, I have found an answer to the question. But the subject was hardly fit for so chatty a paper, and it is all loose ends. If ever I do my book on the Art of Literature, I shall gather them together and be clear.

To-morrow, having once finished off the touches still due on this, I shall tackle *San Francisco* for you. Then the tide of work will fairly bury me, lost to view and hope. You have no idea what it costs me to wring out my work now. I have certainly been a fortnight over this *Romance*, sometimes five hours a day; and yet it is about my usual length—eight pages or so, and would be a d—d sight the better for another curry. But I do not think I can honestly re-write it all; so I call it done, and shall only straighten words in a revision currently.

I had meant to go on for a great while, and say all manner of entertaining things. But all's gone. I am now an idiot.—Yours ever, R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

The following flight of fancy refers to supposed errors of judgment on the part of an eminent firm of publishers, with whom Stevenson had at this time no connection. Very soon afterwards he entered into relations with them which proved equally pleasant and profitable to both parties, and were continued on the most cordial terms until his death.

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos, March* 1882.]

MY DEAR HENLEY,—Last night we had a dinner-party, consisting of the John Addington, curry, onions (lovely

onions), and beefsteak. So unusual is any excitement, that F. and I feel this morning as if we had been to a coronation. However I must, I suppose, write.

I was sorry about your female contributor squabble. 'Tis very comic, but really unpleasant. But what care I? Now that I illustrate my own books, I can always offer you a situation in our house—S. L. Osbourne and Co. As an author gets a halfpenny a copy of verses, and an artist a penny a cut, perhaps a proof-reader might get several pounds a year.

O that Coronation! What a shouting crowd there was! I obviously got a firework in each eye. The king looked very magnificent, to be sure; and that great hall where we feasted on seven hundred delicate foods, and drank fifty royal wines—*quel coup d'œil!* but was it not overdone, even for a coronation—almost a vulgar luxury? And eleven is certainly too late to begin dinner. (It was really 6.30 instead of 5.30.)

Your list of books that Cassells have refused in these weeks is not quite complete; they also refused:—

1. Six undiscovered Tragedies, one romantic Comedy, a fragment of Journal extending over six years, and an unfinished Autobiography reaching up to the first performance of King John. By William Shakespeare.

2. The Journals and Private Correspondence of David, King of Israel.

3. Poetical Works of Arthur, Iron Dook of Wellington including a Monody on Napoleon.

4. Eight books of an unfinished novel, *Solomon Crabb.* By Henry Fielding.

5. Stevenson's Moral Emblems.

You also neglected to mention, as *per contra*, that they had during the same time accepted and triumphantly published Brown's *Handbook to Cricket*, Jones's *First French Reader*, and Robinson's *Picturesque Cheshire*, uniform with the same author's *Stately Homes of Salop.*

O if that list could come true! How we would tear at

Solomon Crabb! O what a bully, bully, bully business. Which would you read first—Shakespeare's autobiography, or his journals? What sport the monody on Napoleon would be—what wooden verse, what stucco ornament! I should read both the autobiography and the journals before I looked at one of the plays, beyond the names of them, which shows that Saintsbury was right, and I do care more for life than for poetry. No—I take it back. Do you know one of the tragedies—a Bible tragedy too—*David*—was written in his third period—much about the same time as Lear? The comedy, *April Rain*, is also a late work. *Beckett* is a fine ranting piece, like *Richard II.*, but very fine for the stage. Irving is to play it this autumn when I'm in town; the part rather suits him—but who is to play Henry—a tremendous creation, sir. Betterton in his private journal seems to have seen this piece; and he says distinctly that Henry is the best part in any play. "Though," he adds, "how it be with the ancient plays I know not. But in this I have ever feared to do ill, and indeed will not be persuaded to that undertaking." So says Betterton. *Rufus* is not so good; I am not pleased with *Rufus;* plainly a *rifacimento* of some inferior work; but there are some damned fine lines. As for the purely satiric ill-minded *Abelard and Heloise*, another *Troilus, quoi!* it is not pleasant, truly, but what strength, what verve, what knowledge of life, and the Canon! What a finished, humorous, rich picture is the Canon! Ah, there was nobody like Shakespeare. But what I like is the David and Absalom business: Absalom is so well felt—you love him as David did; David's speech is one roll of royal music from the first act to the fifth.

I am enjoying *Solomon Crabb* extremely; Solomon's capital adventure with the two highwaymen and Squire Trecothick and Parson Vance; it is as good, I think, as anything in Joseph Andrews. I have just come to the part where the highwayman with the black patch over

his eye has tricked poor Solomon into his place, and the squire and the parson are hearing the evidence. Parson Vance is splendid. How good, too, is old Mrs. Crabb and the coastguardsman in the third chapter, or her delightful quarrel with the sexton of Seaham; Lord Conybeare is surely a little overdone; but I don't know either; he's such damned fine sport. Do you like Sally Barnes? I'm in love with her. Constable Muddon is as good as Dogberry and Verges put together; when he takes Solomon to the cage, and the highwayman gives him Solomon's own guinea for his pains, and kisses Mrs. Muddon, and just then up drives Lord Conybeare, and instead of helping Solomon, calls him all the rascals in Christendom—O Henry Fielding, Henry Fielding! Yet perhaps the scenes at Seaham are the best. But I'm bewildered among all these excellences.

Stay, cried a voice that made the welkin crack—
This here's a dream, return and study BLACK!

—Ever yours, R. L. S.

TO ALEXANDER IRELAND

The following is in reply to a letter Stevenson had received on some questions connected with his proposed Life of Hazlitt from the veteran critic and bibliographer since deceased, Mr. Alexander Ireland. At the foot is to be found the first reference to his new amusement of wood engraving for the Davos Press:—

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos, March* 1882.]

MY DEAR SIR,—This formidable paper need not alarm you; it argues nothing beyond penury of other sorts, and is not at all likely to lead me into a long letter. If I were at all grateful it would, for yours has just passed for me a considerable part of a stormy evening. And speaking of gratitude, let me at once and with becoming eagerness accept your kind invitation to Bowdon. I shall hope, if we can agree as to dates when I am nearer hand, to come to you sometime in the month of May. I was

pleased to hear you were a Scot; I feel more at home with my compatriots always; perhaps the more we are away, the stronger we feel that bond.

You ask about Davos; I have discoursed about it already, rather sillily I think, in the *Pall Mall*, and I mean to say no more, but the ways of the Muse are dubious and obscure, and who knows? I may be wiled again. As a place of residence, beyond a splendid climate, it has to my eyes but one advantage—the neighbourhood of J. A. Symonds—I dare say you know his work, but the man is far more interesting. It has done me, in my two winters' Alpine exile, much good; so much, that I hope to leave it now for ever, but would not be understood to boast. In my present unpardonably crazy state, any cold might send me skipping, either back to Davos, or further off. Let us hope not. It is dear; a little dreary; very far from many things that both my taste and my needs prompt me to seek; and altogether not the place that I should choose of my free will.

I am chilled by your description of the man in question, though I had almost argued so much from his cold and undigested volume. If the republication does not interfere with my publisher, it will not interfere with me; but there, of course, comes the hitch. I do not know Mr. Bentley, and I fear all publishers like the devil from legend and experience both. However, when I come to town, we shall, I hope, meet and understand each other as well as author and publisher ever do. I liked his letters; they seemed hearty, kind, and personal. Still—I am notedly suspicious of the trade—your news of this republication alarms me.

The best of the present French novelists seems to me, incomparably, Daudet. *Les Rois en Exil* comes very near being a masterpiece. For Zola I have no toleration, though the curious, eminently bourgeois, and eminently French creature has power of a kind. But I would he were deleted. I would not give a chapter of old Dumas (mean-

ing himself, not his collaborators) for the whole boiling of the Zolas. Romance with the smallpox—as the great one: diseased anyway and blackhearted and fundamentally at enmity with joy.

I trust that Mrs. Ireland does not object to smoking; and if you are a teetotaller, I beg you to mention it before I come—I have all the vices; some of the virtues also, let us hope—that, at least, of being a Scotchman, and yours very sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

P.S.—My father was in the old High School the last year, and walked in the procession to the new. I blush to own I am an Academy boy; it seems modern, and smacks not of the soil.

P.P.S.—I enclose a good joke—at least, I think so—my first efforts at wood engraving printed by my stepson, a boy of thirteen. I will put in also one of my later attempts. I have been nine days at the art—observe my progress. R. L. S.

To Mrs. Gosse

Mrs. Gosse had sent R. L. S. a miniature Bible illustrated with rude cuts, picked up at an outdoor stall. "Lloyd's new work" is *Black Canyon*.

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos, March* 16, 1882.]

DEAR MRS. GOSSE,—Thank you heartily for the Bible, which is exquisite. I thoroughly appreciate the whole; but have you done justice to the third lion in Daniel (like the third murderer in Macbeth)—a singular animal—study him well. The soldier in the fiery furnace beats me.

I enclose a programme of Lloyd's new work. The work I shall send to-morrow, for the publisher is out and I dare not touch his "plant": *il m'en cuirait*. The

work in question I think a huge lark, but still droller is the author's attitude. Not one incident holds with another from beginning to end; and whenever I discover a new inconsistency, Sam is the first to laugh—with a kind of humorous pride at the thing being so silly.

I saw the note, and I was so sorry my article had not come in time for the old lady. We should all hurry up and praise the living. I must praise Tupper. A propos, did you ever read him?—or know any one who had? That is very droll; but the truth is we all live in a clique, buy each other's books and like each other's books; and the great, gaunt, grey, gaping public snaps its big fingers and reads Talmage and Tupper—and *Black Canyon*.

My wife is better; I, for the moment, am but so-so myself; but the printer is in very—how shall we say?—large type at this present, and the sound of the press never ceases. Remember me to Weg.—Yours very truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

NOTICE
To-day is published by S. L. Osbourne & Co.
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BLACK CANYON,
or
WILD ADVENTURES IN THE FAR WEST.
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Although *Black Canyon* is rather shorter than ordinary for that kind of story, it is an excellent work. We cordially recommend it to our readers.—*Weekly Messenger.*

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striking. It reflects the highest honour on its writer.—*Morning Call.*

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To Sidney Colvin

I had written to him of the proposal that I should do the volume on Keats for Macmillan's *English Men of Letters* series. From his essay, *Talk and Talkers*, I was eventually left out.

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos-Platz, Spring* 1882.]

DEAR COLVIN,—About Keats—well yes, I wonder; I see all your difficulties and yet, I have the strongest kind of feeling that critical biography is your real vein. The Landor was one nail; another, I think, would be good for you and the public. Indeed I would do the Keats. He *is* worth doing; it is a brave and a sad little story, and the critical part lies deep in the very vitals of art. All summed, I would do him; remember it is but a small order alongside of Landor; and £100, and kudos, and a good word for the poor, great lad, who will otherwise fall among the molluscs. Up, heart! give me a John Keats! Houghton, though he has done it with grace, has scarce done it with grip.

I have put you into *Talk and Talkers* sure enough. God knows, I hope I shall offend nobody; I do begin to quake mightily over that paper. I have a *Gossip on Romance* about done; it puts some real criticism in a light way, I think. It is destined for Longman who (dead secret) is bringing out a new Mag. (6d.) in the Autumn. Dead Secret: all his letters are three deep with masks and passwords, and I swear on a skull daily. F. has re-read *Treasure I^d.*, against which she protested; and now she thinks the end about as good as the beginning; only some six chapters situate about the midst of the tale to

be rewritten. This sounds hopefuller. My new long story, *The Adventures of John Delafield*, is largely planned.

R. L. S.

To Edmund Gosse

Stevenson and Mr. Gosse were still meditating a book in which some of the famous historical murder cases should be retold (see above, p. 338). "Gray" and "Keats" are volumes in the *English Men of Letters* series.

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos, March* 23, 1882.]

MY DEAR WEG,—And I had just written the best note to Mrs. Gosse that was in my power. Most blameable.

I now send (for Mrs. Gosse)

BLACK CANYON

Also an advertisement of my new appearance as poet (bard, rather) and hartis on wood. The cut represents the Hero and the Eagle, and is emblematic of Cortez first viewing the Pacific Ocean, which (according to the bard Keats) it took place in Darien. The cut is much admired for the sentiment of discovery, the manly proportions of the voyager, and the fine impression of tropical scenes and the untrodden WASTE, so aptly rendered by the hartis.

I would send you the book; but I declare I'm ruined. I got a penny a cut and a halfpenny a set of verses from the flint-hearted publisher, and only one specimen copy, as I'm a sinner. —— was apostolic alongside of Osbourne.

I hope you will be able to decipher this, written at steam speed with a breaking pen, the hotfast postman at my heels. No excuse, says you. None, sir, says I, and touches my 'at most civil (extraordinary evolution of pen, now quite doomed—to resume—) I have not put pen to the Bloody Murder yet. But it is early on my list; and when once I get to it, three weeks should see the last bloodstain—maybe a fortnight. For I am beginning to combine an extraordinary laborious slowness while at

work, with the most surprisingly quick results in the way of finished manuscripts. How goes Gray? Colvin is to do Keats. My wife is still not well.—Yours ever,

R. L. S.

To Dr. Alexander Japp

"The enclosed" means a packet of the Davos Press cuts.

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos, March* 1882.]

MY DEAR DR. JAPP,—You must think me a forgetful rogue, as indeed I am; for I have but now told my publisher to send you a copy of the *Familiar Studies*. However, I own I have delayed this letter till I could send you the enclosed. Remembering the nights at Braemar when we visited the Picture Gallery, I hoped they might amuse you. You see, we do some publishing hereaway. I shall hope to see you in town in May.—Always yours faithfully, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Dr. Alexander Japp

The references in the first paragraph are to the volume *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*.

Chalet am Stein, Davos, April 1, 1882.

MY DEAR DR. JAPP,—A good day to date this letter, which is in fact a confession of incapacity. During my wife's illness I somewhat lost my head, and entirely lost a great quire of corrected proofs. This is one of the results; I hope there are none more serious. I was never so sick of any volume as I was of that; I was continually receiving fresh proofs with fresh infinitesimal difficulties. I was ill—I did really fear my wife was worse than ill. Well, it's out now; and though I have observed several carelessnesses myself, and now here's another of your finding—of which, indeed, I ought to be ashamed—it will only justify the sweeping humility of the Preface.

Symonds was actually dining with us when your letter

came, and I communicated your remarks. . . . He is a far better and more interesting thing than any of his books.

The Elephant was my wife's; so she is proportionately elate you should have picked it out for praise—from a collection, let me add, so replete with the highest qualities of art.

My wicked carcase, as John Knox calls it, holds together wonderfully. In addition to many other things, and a volume of travel, I find I have written, since December, 90 Cornhill pages of magazine work—essays and stories: 40,000 words, and I am none the worse—I am the better. I begin to hope I may, if not outlive this wolverine upon my shoulders, at least carry him bravely like Symonds and Alexander Pope. I begin to take a pride in that hope.

I shall be much interested to see your criticisms; you might perhaps send them to me. I believe you know that is not dangerous; one folly I have not—I am not touchy under criticism.

Lloyd and my wife both beg to be remembered; and Lloyd sends as a present a work of his own. I hope you feel flattered; for this is *simply the first time he has ever given one away.* I have to buy my own works, I can tell you.—Yours very sincerely,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To W. E. Henley

From about this time until 1885 Mr. Henley acted in an informal way as agent for R. L. S. in most of his dealings with publishers in London. "Both" in the second paragraph means, I think, *Treasure Island* and *Silverado Squatters.*

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos, April* 1882.]

MY DEAR HENLEY,—I hope and hope for a long letter —soon I hope to be superseded by long talks—and it comes not. I remember I have never formally thanked

you for that hundred quid, nor in general for the introduction to Chatto and Windus, and continue to bury you in copy as if you were my private secretary. Well, I am not unconscious of it all; but I think least said is often best, generally best; gratitude is a tedious sentiment, it's not ductile, not dramatic.

If Chatto should take both, *cui dedicare?* I am running out of dedikees; if I do, the whole fun of writing is stranded. *Treasure Island*, if it comes out, and I mean it shall, of course goes to Lloyd. Lemme see, I have now dedicated to

W. E. H. [William Ernest Henley].
S. C. [Sidney Colvin].
T. S. [Thomas Stevenson].
Simp. [Sir Walter Simpson].

There remain: C. B., the Williamses—you know they were the parties who stuck up for us about our marriage, and Mrs. W. was my guardian angel, and our Best Man and Bridesmaid rolled in one, and the only third of the wedding party—my sister-in-law, who is booked for *Prince Otto*—Jenkin I suppose some time—George Meredith, the only man of genius of my acquaintance, and then I believe I'll have to take to the dead, the immortal memory business.

Talking of Meredith, I have just re-read for the third and fourth time *The Egoist.* When I shall have read it the sixth or seventh, I begin to see I shall know about it. You will be astonished when you come to re-read it; I had no idea of the matter—human, red matter he has contrived to plug and pack into that strange and admirable book. Willoughby is, of course, a pure discovery; a complete set of nerves, not heretofore examined, and yet running all over the human body—a suit of nerves. Clara is the best girl ever I saw anywhere. Vernon is almost as good. The manner and the faults of the book

greatly justify themselves on further study. Only Dr. Middleton does not hang together; and Ladies Busshe and Culmer *sont des monstruosités.* Vernon's conduct makes a wonderful odd contrast with Daniel Deronda's. I see more and more that Meredith is built for immortality.

Talking of which, Heywood, as a small immortal, an immortalet, claims some attention. *The Woman killed with Kindness* is one of the most striking novels—not plays, though it's more of a play than anything else of his—I ever read. He had such a sweet, sound soul, the old boy. The death of the two pirates in *Fortune by Sea and Land* is a document. He had obviously been present, and heard Purser and Clinton take death by the beard with similar braggadocios. Purser and Clinton, names of pirates; Scarlet and Bobbington, names of highwaymen. He had the touch of names, I think. No man I ever knew had such a sense, such a tact, for English nomenclature: Rainsforth, Lacy, Audley, Forrest, Acton, Spencer, Frankford—so his names run.

Byron not only wrote *Don Juan;* he called Joan of Arc "a fanatical strumpet." These are his words. I think the double shame, first to a great poet, second to an English noble, passes words.

Here is a strange gossip.—I am yours loquaciously,

R. L. S.

My lungs are said to be in a splendid state. A cruel examination, an exa*nim*ation I may call it, had this brave result. *Taïaut!* Hillo! Hey! Stand by! Avast! Hurrah!

To Mrs. T. Stevenson

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos, April* 9, 1882.]

MY DEAR MOTHER,—Herewith please find belated birthday present. Fanny has another.

Cockshot = Jenkin.	But
Jack = Bob.	pray
Burly = Henley.	regard
Athelred = Simpson.	these
Opalstein = Symonds.	as
Purcel = Gosse.	secrets.

My dear mother, how can I keep up with your breathless changes? Innerleithen, Cramond, Bridge of Allan, Dunblane, Selkirk. I lean to Cramond, but I shall be pleased anywhere, any respite from Davos; never mind, it has been a good, though a dear lesson. Now, with my improved health, if I can pass the summer, I believe I shall be able no more to exceed, no more to draw on you. It is time I sufficed for myself indeed. And I believe I can.

I am still far from satisfied about Fanny; she is certainly better, but it is by fits a good deal, and the symptoms continue, which should not be. I had her persuaded to leave without me this very day (Saturday 8th), but the disclosure of my mismanagement broke up that plan; she would not leave me lest I should mismanage more. I think this an unfair revenge; but I have been so bothered that I cannot struggle. All Davos has been drinking our wine. During the month of March, three litres a day were drunk—O it is too sickening—and that is only a specimen. It is enough to make any one a misanthrope, but the right thing is to hate the donkey that was duped—which I devoutly do.

I have this winter finished *Treasure Island*, written the preface to the *Studies*, a small book about the *Inland Voyage* size, *The Silverado Squatters*, and over and above that upwards of ninety (90) Cornhill pages of magazine work. No man can say I have been idle.—Your affectionate son, R. L. STEVENSON.

To R. A. M. Stevenson

[*Chalet am Stein, Davos-Platz, April* 1882.]

MY DEAR BOB,—Yours received. I have received a communication by same mail from my mother, clamouring for news, which I must answer as soon as I've done this. Of course, I shall paint your game in lively colours.

I hope to get away from here—let me not speak of it ungratefully—from here—by Thursday at latest. I am indeed much better ; but a slip of the foot may still cast me back. I must walk circumspectly yet awhile. But O to be able to go out and get wet, and not spit blood next day !

Yes, I remember the *enfantement* of the Arabian Nights ; the first idea of all was the handsome cabs, which I communicated to you in St. Leonard's Terrace drawing-room. That same afternoon the Prince de Galles and the Suicide Club were invented ; and several more now forgotten. I must try to start 'em again.

Lloyd I believe is to be a printer—in the meantime he confines himself to being an expense. He is a first-rate lad for all that. He is now interrupting me about twice to the line, which does not condooce to clarity, I'm afraid.

Fanny is still far from well, quite far from well. My faith is in the Pirate.

I enclose all my artistic works ; they are woodcuts—I cut them with a knife out of blocks of wood : I am a wood-engraver ; I aaaam a wooooood engraaaaver. Lloyd then prints 'em : are they not fun ? I doat on them ; in my next venture, I am going to have colour printing ; it will be very laborious, six blocks to cut for each picter, but the result would be pyramidal.

If I get through the summer, I settle in Autumn in le pays de France ; I believe in the Brittany and become a *Snoozer.* You will come and snooze awhile won't you, and try and get Louisa to join.

Pepys was a decent fellow ; singularly like Charles

Baxter, by the way, in every character of mind and taste, and not unlike him in face. I did not mean I had been too just to him but not just enough to bigger swells. I would rather have *known* Pepys than the whole jing-bang; I doat on him as a card to know.

We shall be pretty poor at the start, of course, but I guess we can haul through. Only intending visitors to the Brittannic Castle must not look for nightingales' tongues. When next you see the form of the jeune et beau pray give him my love, when I come to Weybridge, I'll hope to see him.—Ever yours affectionately,

R. L. STEVENSON, 1er Roi de Béotie.

Pour copie conforme,
Le sécrétaire Royale, W. P. BANNATYNE.

To TREVOR HADDON

The few remaining letters of this period are dated from Edinburgh and from Stobo Manse, near Peebles. This, in the matter of weather and health, was the most disappointing of all Stevenson's attempts at summer residence in Scotland. Before going to Stobo he made a short excursion with his father to Lochearnhead; and later spent some three weeks with me at Kingussie, but from neither place wrote any letters worth preserving. The following was addressed to a young art-student who had read the works of Walt Whitman after reading Stevenson's essay on him, and being staggered by some things he found there had written asking for further comment and counsel.

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh* [*June* 1882].

DEAR SIR,—If I have in any way disquieted you, I believe you are justified in bidding me stand and deliver a remedy if there be one: which is the point.

1st I am of your way of thinking: that a good deal of Whitman is as well taken once but 2nd I quite believe that it is better to have everything brought before one in books. In that way the problems reach us when we are cool, and not warped by the sophistries of an instant passion. Life itself presents its problems with a terrible directness and at the very hour when we are least able to

judge calmly. Hence this Pisgah sight of all things, off the top of a book, is only a rational preparation for the ugly grips that must follow.

But 3rd, no man can settle another's life for him. It is the test of the nature and courage of each that he shall decide it for himself. Each in turn must meet and beard the Sphynx. Some things however I must say—and you will treat them as things read in a book for you to accept or refuse as you shall see most fit.

Go not out of your way to make difficulties. Hang back from life while you are young. Shoulder no responsibilities. You do not yet know how far you can trust yourself—it will not be very far, or you are more fortunate than I am. If you can keep your sexual desires in order, be glad, be very glad. Some day, when you meet your fate, you will be free, and the better man. *Don't make a boy and girl friendship that which it is not.* Look at Burns: that is where amourettes conduct an average good man; and a tepid marriage is only a more selfish amourette—in the long run. Whatever you do, see that you don't sacrifice a woman; that's where all imperfect loves conduct us. At the same time, if you can make it convenient to be chaste, for God's sake, avoid the primness of your virtue; hardness to a poor harlot is a sin lower than the ugliest unchastity.

Never be in a hurry anyhow.

There is my sermon.

Certainly, you cannot too earnestly go in for the Greek; and about any art, think last of what pays, first of what pleases. It is in that spirit only that an art can be made. Progress in art is made by learning to *enjoy* it. That which seems a little dull at first, is found to contain the elements of pleasure more largely though more quietly commingled.

I return to my sermon for one more word: Natural desire gives you no right to any particular woman: that comes with love only, and don't be too ready to believe

in love: there are many shams: the true love will not allow you to reason about it.

It is your fault if I appear so pulpiteering.

Wishing you well in life and art, and that you may long be young.—Believe me, yours truly,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Edmund Gosse

[*Edinburgh*] *Sunday* [*June* 1882].

. . . NOTE turned up, but no gray opuscule, which, however, will probably turn up to-morrow in time to go out with me to Stobo Manse, Peeblesshire, where, if you can make it out, you will be a good soul to pay a visit. I shall write again about the opuscule; and about Stobo, which I have not seen since I was thirteen, though my memory speaks delightfully of it.

I have been very tired and seedy, or I should have written before, *inter alia*, to tell you that I had visited my murder place and found *living traditions* not yet in any printed book; most startling. I also got photographs taken, but the negatives have not yet turned up. I lie on the sofa to write this, whence the pencil; having slept yesterday—$1 + 4 + 7\frac{1}{2} = 12\frac{1}{2}$ hours and being (9 A.M.) very anxious to sleep again. The arms of Porpus, quoi! A poppy gules, etc.

From Stobo you can conquer Peebles and Selkirk, or to give them their old decent names, Tweeddale and Ettrick. Think of having been called Tweeddale, and being called PEEBLES! Did I ever tell you my skit on my own travel books? We understand that Mr. Stevenson has in the press another volume of unconventional travels: *Personal Adventures in Peeblesshire*. Je la trouve méchante.—Yours affectionately, R. L. S.

Did I say I had seen a verse on two of the Buccaneers? I did, and *ça-y-est*.

To Trevor Haddon

17 *Heriot Row, Edinburgh* [*June* 1882].

MY DEAR SIR,—I see nothing "cheekie" in anything you have done. Your letters have naturally given me much pleasure, for it seems to me you are a pretty good young fellow, as young fellows go; and if I add that you remind me of myself, you need not accuse me of retrospective vanity.

You now know an address which will always find me; you might let me have your address in London; I do not promise anything — for I am always overworked in London—but I shall, if I can arrange it, try to see you.

I am afraid I am not so rigid on chastity: you are probably right in your view; but this seems to me a dilemma with two horns, the real curse of a man's life in our state of society—and a woman's too, although, for many reasons, it appears somewhat differently with the enslaved sex. By your "fate" I believe I meant your marriage, or that love at least which may befall any one of us at the shortest notice and overthrow the most settled habits and opinions. I call that your fate, because then, if not before, you can no longer hang back, but must stride out into life and act.—Believe me, yours sincerely, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

To Edmund Gosse

Mr. Gosse had mistaken the name of the Peeblesshire manse, and is reproached accordingly. "Gray" is Mr. Gosse's volume on that poet in Mr. Morley's series of *English Men of Letters*.

Stobo Manse, Peeblesshire [*July* 1882].

I WOULD shoot you, but I have no bow:
The place is not called Stobs, but Stobo.
As Gallic Kids complain of "Bobo,"
I mourn for your mistake of Stobo.

First, we shall be gone in September. But if you think of coming in August, my mother will hunt for you with pleasure. We should all be overjoyed—though Stobo it could not be, as it is but a kirk and manse, but possibly somewhere within reach. Let us know.

Second, I have read your Gray with care. A more difficult subject I can scarce fancy; it is crushing; yet I think you have managed to shadow forth a man, and a good man too; and honestly, I doubt if I could have done the same. This may seem egoistic; but you are not such a fool as to think so. It is the natural expression of real praise. The book as a whole is readable; your subject peeps every here and there out of the crannies like a shy violet—he could do no more—and his aroma hangs there.

I write to catch a minion of the post. Hence brevity. Answer about the house.—Yours affectionately,

R. L. S.

To W. E. Henley

In the heat of conversation Stevenson was accustomed to invent any number of fictitious personages, generally Scottish, and to give them names and to set them playing their imaginary parts in life, reputable or otherwise. Many of these inventions, including Mr. Pirbright Smith and Mr. Pegfurth Bannatyne, were a kind of incarnations of himself, or of special aspects of himself; they assumed for him and his friends a kind of substantial existence; and constantly in talk, and occasionally in writing, he would keep up the play of reporting their sayings and doings quite gravely, as in the following:—

[*Stobo Manse, July* 1882.]

DEAR HENLEY, . . . I am not worth an old damn. I am also crushed by bad news of Symonds; his good lung going; I cannot help reading it as a personal hint; God help us all! Really, I am not very fit for work; but I try, try, and nothing comes of it.

I believe we shall have to leave this place; it is low, damp, and *mauchy;* the rain it raineth every day; and the glass goes tol-de-rol-de-riddle.

Yet it's a bonny bit; I wish I could live in it, but doubt. I wish I was well away somewhere else. I feel like flight some days; honour bright.

Pirbright Smith is well. Old Mr. Pegfurth Bannatyne is here staying at a country inn. His whole baggage is a pair of socks and a book in a fishing-basket; and he borrows even a rod from the landlord. He walked here over the hills from Sanquhar, "singin'," he says, "like a mavis." I naturally asked him about Hazlitt. "He wouldnae take his drink," he said, "a queer, queer fellow." But did not seem further communicative. He says he has become "releegious," but still swears like a trooper. I asked him if he had no headquarters. "No likely," said he. He says he is writing his memoirs, which will be interesting. He once met Borrow; they boxed; "and Geordie," says the old man chuckling, "gave me the damnedest hiding." Of Wordsworth he remarked, "He wasnae sound in the faith, sir, and a milk-blooded, blue-spectacled bitch forbye. But his po'mes are grand—there's no denying that." I asked him what his book was. "I havenae mind," said he—that was his only book! On turning it out, I found it was one of my own, and on showing it to him, he remembered it at once. "O aye," he said, "I mind now. It's pretty bad; ye'll have to do better than that, chieldy," and chuckled, chuckled. He is a strange old figure, to be sure. He cannot endure Pirbright Smith—"a mere æsthatic," he said. "Pooh!" "Fishin' and relcegion—these are my aysthatics," he wound up.

I thought this would interest you, so scribbled it down. I still hope to get more out of him about Hazlitt, though he utterly pooh-poohed the idea of writing H.'s life. "Ma life now," he said, "there's been queer things in *it*." He is seventy-nine! but may well last to a hundred!—Yours ever,

R. L. S.

END OF VOL. XXIII.

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